THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION: THE IMPACT OF AGENCY-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS AND PERCEPTION OF CRISIS STRATEGIES ON CRISIS-RELATED TASK CONFLICT, PERFORMANCE, AND SATISFACTION

Jin Hong Ha

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Approved by:

Lois Boynton

Debashis Aikat

Francesca Carpentier

Mary Beth Oliver

Daniel Riffe

ABSTRACT

JIN HONG HA: The role of relationships in crisis communication: The impact of agency-client relationships and perception of crisis strategies on crisis-related task conflict, performance, and satisfaction
(Under the direction of Lois Boynton)

The main purpose of this dissertation is to examine the effect of the public relations agency-client relationship on crisis communication effectiveness. To do so, 18 hypotheses were developed, based on the links among the status of relationships, agreement perception of crisis communication strategies, crisis-related task conflict, performance, and satisfaction. The sample of this study is Korean public relations practitioners working at public relations agencies or client organizations. An online survey was conducted for data collection, and Structural Equation Modeling statistics (i.e., Amos) was employed for data analyses.

First, the results of this study revealed that two relationship variables (*trusting* and *mutual* relationships) had statistically significant effects on all three endogenous variables (*perceived task conflict*, *performance, and satisfaction*) as an expected direction, except for the effect of *trusting relationship* on *perceived task conflict*. *Agreement perception* positively affected *perceived task conflict*, which is inconsistent with the direction of the hypothesis. This research found no direct effects of *perceived task conflict* on *perceived task performance* and *satisfaction*.

Second, with regard to indirect effects, two indirect effects of *trusting relationship* and *mutual relationship* on *perceived task satisfaction* through *perceived*

task performance were statistically significant. However, *trusting* and *mutual* relationships' indirect effects on *perceived task satisfaction* through *perceived task conflict* were not statistically significant. This suggests that perceived task performance has a more significant mediating role between the agency-client relationship and perceived task satisfaction than does perceived task conflict.

Third, according to the results of EFA and CFA, two factors (trust and control mutuality) were extracted for the relationship construct, and a single factor was yielded for the agreement perception construct. This means that Korean public relations practitioners are not likely to differentiate the concept of commitment from trust and control mutuality. Also, Korean practitioners do not seem to separate crisis strategies into three stages; rather, they perceive the strategies for a single crisis stage.

This study contributed to the literature of relationships in public relations not only by exploring the effect of inter-organizational relationships but also by applying the relationship to crisis communication. Furthermore, this study expanded the roles of relationships in crisis communication by revealing the results that the agency-client relationship can play a role as an antecedent factor that influences crisis communication effectiveness in terms of task conflict, performance, and satisfaction.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Effectiveness in public relations can be found at the level of individual practitioners, organizations, or society (Dozier & Broom, 2006; Hon, 1997). Building positive and long-term relationships with publics throughout each of these levels is a key factor to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of public relations (Ledingham, 2006).

As public relations has focused on building relationships, public relations scholars have focused on examining factors that influence how relationships are built (e.g., Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Ledingham, 2003). This research trend resulted in considering the relationship only as the outcome or ultimate goal of public relations processes. Public relations scholars have also focused on the relationships between organizations and the general publics (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Grunig & Huang, 2000). As a result, the relationships between organizations have been overlooked.

Over time, the roles of public relations have changed and become more diverse (Botan & Hazleton, 2006). Recently, crisis communication research is considered an emerging area in public relations (Pasadeos, Berger, & Renfro, 2010). In crisis communication, the importance of the relationships between organizations, and their impact are emphasized in order to effectively deal with a crisis.

Accordingly, as one of organizational relationships, the agency-client relationship is very important when a company facing a crisis makes efforts to overcome the crisis.

As organizations become more complex and tasks become more specialized, clients need to maintain a positive relationship with their agencies to foster a more effective completion of tasks and goals (Stanford, 2008). In a crisis, for example, client and agency practitioners are supposed to share a goal of dealing with the crisis event effectively and should work together as partners to achieve the goal (Veil, 2012). To do so, a public relations agency can provide its client with additional human resources with objective counsel during a crisis (Swann, 2010).

The agency-client relationship in a crisis situation can influence the effectiveness of crisis communication. A favorable relationship between partners creates a synergy that not only multiplies the reach and effectiveness of each partner but also enhances the opportunity for the partners to complete their tasks together (Fam & Waller, 2008). Therefore, it can be said that the status of the agency-client relationship can also affect the process and effectiveness of crisis communication. For example, a good agency-client relationship in a crisis can lead to clear and rapid communication, increasing the quality of decisions, whereas a bad relationship can cause breakdowns in communication increasing harm and prolong chronic effects of the crisis (Henke, 1995).

As the importance of strategic crisis communication and management in South Korea increases, both public relations scholars and practitioners have paid attention to the roles of agency-client relationships. In South Korea, there are a couple of specific aspects regarding the agency-client relationship and crisis communication. First, the agency-client relationship in South Korea is hierarchical, which reflects national cultures.

Second, crisis communication in South Korea is quite a new field, so that there is plenty of freedom to study the role of relationships in a crisis, as well as crisis communication strategies and their effectiveness.

Thus, the present study examines whether Korean agency-client relationships play a role as an antecedent factor that influences the effectiveness of crisis communication in terms of crisis-related task conflict, performance, and satisfaction perceived by agency and client practitioners. It contributes to expanding the role of relationships of public relations not only by exploring the effects of the agency-client relationship but also by applying the relationship to crisis communication.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

This section reviews crisis communication strategies introduced in crisis stage models, looks into the agency-client relationship, and outlines their impacts on crisis communication effectiveness. Also, it suggests research hypotheses that explicate the links among perceived task conflict, performance, satisfaction, perceived status of relationships and perceived agreement on crisis communication strategies by agency and client practitioners.

Crisis Stage Models and Communication Strategies

In 1963, Herman specified three conditions of organizational crisis: 1) threat to high priority values of organizations; 2) presentation of a restricted amount of time to manage a crisis and close media attention; and 3) unexpectedness. These characteristics and conditions of crises indicate the need for and importance of strategic crisis communication. Crisis communication enables organizations to monitor their environments before and during a crisis, understand and respond appropriately, construct a consistent interpretation, and resolve the crisis (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). However, poor communication can intensify the magnitude of a crisis to a point where recovery is impossible.

Crisis scholars have taken biological perspectives about crisis development. In other words, each crisis is treated as though it has its own life cycle and goes through different phases. This perspective reflects time-ordered dimensions of a crisis, which describe a crisis event as a series of interrelated phenomena developing over time (Fink, 1986; Guth, 1995). This approach is useful to provide crisis managers with a better sense of how to appropriate a and how to select appropriate crisis communication strategies (Seeger et al., 2003). Another advantage of this approach is that the development of a crisis can be described regardless of the crisis or type of industry (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). There are several models of the crisis lifecycle that have been studied.

First, Turner (1976) suggests a six-stage model. *Stage I* refers to a point of normal operations in which members have culturally accepted beliefs about the world and its hazards, and have associated precautionary norms (i.e., set of laws, codes of practices, and folkways). *Stage II* is the crisis incubation period, during which the crisis is usually ignored because crisis cues are largely unrecognized or perceived as unimportant. In *Stage III*, the crisis is first recognized through a trigger event that disrupts normal, routine operations but is still difficult to define in terms of causes and problems. *Stage IV* involves the onset of the crisis when the direct and immediate impact and harm from the crisis occurs. *Stage V* is the phase of rescue and salvage when there is full recognition of the collapse of beliefs and norms. This recognition forces the organization to activate crisis plans and to manage strategic crisis responses to rescue victims. *Stage VI* is the phase in which beliefs and norms are culturally readjusted until they are compatible with the new insights and understanding, so that some general consensus is reached about cause, blame, and responsibility. This leads to a return to a new *Stage I*, a point of normal operations and procedures.

Second, Fink's (1986) crisis lifecycle model separates crisis development into four stages using a medical illness metaphor: prodromal, acute, chronic, and resolution. The *prodromal stage* is when the first warning signs or clues forewarn of matters to come. The *acute stage* is defined in terms of when a crisis-triggering event began and ended. In the *chronic stage*, the crisis continues as the organization responds to the matter and newspaper exposes, interviews, congressional investigations, or audits occur. Finally, the *resolution stage* is the goal of all initial stages, in which a clear signal marks the end of the crisis event.

Third, Pauchant, and Mitroff's (1992) five-phase model consists of signal detection, preparation/prevention, containment/damage limitation, recovery, and learning. These five phases are classified into three crisis management strategies: proactive, reactive, and interactive. The first phase, *signal detection*, concerns recognition of early-symptoms of a crisis and identification of crisis cues. A crisis-prone organization is likely to block out the signals of crisis, while a crisis-prepared organization is able to recognize even very weak signals. The second phase, *preparation and prevention*, is closely related to the first stage because both preparation and prevention are possible not only when the signals have been detected but also when the crisis situation is still under control. So, the first and second phases are grouped as a proactive crisis management strategy. The third phase, *containment/damage limitation*, involves the efforts to control damage. Pauchant and Mitroff emphasized the need to control not only physical damage but also the diffusion of information. They argued that once the information is distributed through the media, damage could be intensified. In the fourth phase, *recovery*, the organization aims to return to normal operations by recovering the losses of tangible and intangible assets and repairing relationships with internal and external publics. The third and fourth phases are classified as reactive crisis management strategies because organizations are reacting to a crisis already in progress. The final phase, *learning*, involves assessment of all earlier stages in order to “review and critique so as to learn what was done well and what was done poorly so that the organization can handle crises better in the future” (pp. 107). So, the learning stage is identified as an interactive crisis management strategy.

The crisis stage models discussed here reflect three stages of a crisis: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis (Coombs, 2012; Ray, 1999; Seeger et al., 2003; Ulmer, 2001). Table 1 summarizes the crisis stage models. The *pre-crisis stage* is a point of preparation, and an understanding of risks and procedures for crisis mitigation. In this sense, as the time of the normal operation, preparation, and sensing before the onset of a trigger event, Turner’s (1976) stage I and II, Fink’s (1986) prodromal stage, and Pauchant and Mitroff’s (1992) first two phases (signal detection; preparation and prevention) can be collapsed into the pre-crisis stage. The *crisis stage* is the period when harm is initiated and where a majority of the direct harm occurs with a trigger event. So, organizations are forced to respond to the crisis with offering explanations about causes, blame, responsibility, and consequence. Thus, the crisis stage encompasses Turner’s stage III and IV, Fink’s acute and chronic stages, and Pauchant and Mitroff’s containment/damage limitation stage. The final stage, *post-crisis*, involves investigation and evaluation that provide plausible explanation of what is the cause, who is to blame, and what and how should be done to prevent a recurrence. Also, this stage is a time to continue the momentum of self-organizing and renewal initiated in the crisis stage. In this sense, the post-crisis stage encompasses Turner's last two stages (rescue and salvage; readjustment), Fink's resolution stage, and Pauchant and Mitroff's last two stages (recovery and learning).

Because crisis communication strategies required for each crisis stage differ, a perception gap of the crisis-related strategies between agency and client may impact the effectiveness of crisis communication. The perception discrepancy may result in task conflict. In addition to the perception gap, this study suggests that the status of relationships between agencies and clients would also affect perceived task conflict as well as task performance and satisfaction. Next sections deal further with the concepts of relationships, task conflict, performance, and satisfaction.

Relationships and Crisis Communication

As established in the previous section, an organizational crisis is defined as a specific, unanticipated, complex, and non-routine based series of events that create uncertainty and are a threat to organizations' assets, reputation, and goals (Perrow, 1984; Seeger et al., 2003). Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) described the characteristics of organizational crises as increasing, unanticipated, unknown, unforeseeable, widespread, complex and threatening. In organizational crisis communication, the inter-organizational relationship is emphasized in order to deal effectively with a crisis. The following section explains the relationship management theory in public relations, and describes how it relates to crisis communication.

Relationship Management Theory

As the core theory of public relations, relationship management theory emphasizes the role of relationships in public relations academy and practice (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). This theory posits that public relations is valuable when public relations activities help an organization develop good relationships with the publics, which "establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, pp. 2).

Originally, the relationship management theory emerged with a focus on the essence of public relations and what it can or should do (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Because of this, many public relations scholars have emphasized the importance of the relationship management. Also, many have tried to define the concept of relationships and explore its role in public relations. For example, Ferguson (1984) called for attention to relationships within the study and practice of public relations. After her suggestion, Ehling (1992) suggested a shift from manipulation of public opinion to a focus on building, nurturing, and maintaining relationships as the core function of public relations. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994) and Grunig (1992) also defined the purpose of public relations as building relationships with publics that enhance the ability of an organization to reach its goal. More recently, Ledingham (2003) emphasized the roles of relationships in public relations, and explained that the relationship management theory has clarified the function of public relations within an organizational structure and has provided a framework for determining the contribution of public relations to achieve organizational missions.

Public relations scholars have conducted several studies in the last decade that quantitatively measure relationships to demonstrate the relationship management theory's contribution to achieving organizational goals (e.g., Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Ferguson, 1984; Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001). Through those studies, common elements of relationships have emerged: trust, openness, understanding, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality.

Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, and Lesko (1997) defined openness as the degree to which "organizations share information with members of key publics" (pp. 173). They also conceptualized trust as the degree to which "an organization can be trusted to do what it says it will do and whether the organization is involved in, invests in, and is committed to the welfare of the community in which it operates" (pp. 173). Commitment was defined as "the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, pp. 3). Satisfaction referred to "the extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced" (pp. 3). Control mutuality referred to "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another" (pp. 3).

These elements of relationships have been applied in public relations on both individual and organizational levels. At the individual level, interpersonal communication research has revealed that "trust" can influence the quality of relationships among people (Brehm, 1992; Miller & Rogers, 1976; Roloff, 1981). For instance, Veil (2012) found that the relationship between individuals deteriorated due to a lack of trust, which ultimately inhibited their collaboration. The application of relationship elements has also been expanded to the level of organizations. In that context, relationships have been broadly studied to explore the roles they play and how they affect organization-public relationships (Ledingham, 2006).

In this sense, relationship research has focused heavily on identifying factors that predict good relationships. In other words, the relationships have been mainly studied as a dependent or outcome variable in public relations fields. With regard to the effects of relationship elements, Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) found that the public expects "control mutuality" to extend for the life of the relationship. Further, they suggest that organizations that attempt to manipulate the public solely for their own benefit cannot expect to develop long-term relationships with the public. Ledingham and

Bruning (2001) also conclude that the key to managing successful relationships is to "understand" what both organizations and publics must do for each other in order to initiate, develop, and maintain their relationships. This means that to be effective and sustaining, relationships need to be seen as "mutually beneficial," which is based on a mutual interest between an organization and its significant publics.

It cannot be denied that Ferguson's (1984) suggestion of attention to relationships initiated new thinking about relationships in public relations fields. However, as mentioned before, relationships were usually as the outcome or ultimate goal of public relations processes, which means that relationships have been mainly studied as a dependent variable in public relations studies. Furthermore, previous studies of relationships have focused primarily on the organization-public relationships (OPR). In other words, previous research has scarcely examined relationships through the lens of inter-organizational relationships (IOR).

OPR refers to the relationship between an organization and its key publics or constituencies to which it should pay attention (Broom et al., 2000). This includes customers, investors, and donors, as well as government officials, community leaders, and employees (Hallahan et al., 2007). On the other hand, IOR refers to the relationship between an organization and one or more organizations, which may occur between business partnership organizations or between organizations that are hierarchically higher and lower than one another (Oliver, 1990). Also, types of IOR include joint ventures, consortia, alliances, agency-client linkages, and trade associations (Barringer & Harrison, 2000).

Since Ferguson's suggestions, public relations research has centered mainly on OPR. Research needs to explore the influence of relationships that exist in a different context: that of inter-organizational relationships. Although many studies in business and marketing areas have looked at the functions of business relationships, there has been little research in public relations. Some business scholars suggested the relationship dimensions that predict consumer behavior could be used to predict the purchasing patterns in business-to-business relationships (e.g., Carlston & Mae, 2007; Kotler & Mondak, 1985; Pryor, Reeder, & Monroe, 2012). Furthermore, business scholars insisted that if the cornerstone on which business relationships are built is trust, and if it is managed based on trust, the business relationship can ultimately maximize the potential for mutual benefit (Wong & Sohal, 2002). This suggestion reflects the notion that the OPR indicators such as trust, control mutuality, and commitment could be extended to the IOR context.

In fact, organizations are willing to enter relationships to gain collaborative advantages and positive outcomes that could not be achieved by working independently (Huxham, 1966). Tayor and Doerfel (2005) proposed an inter-organizational model of how organizations should work together to successfully achieve their common goal to build and maintain a civil society. They found that some organizations (e.g., NGOs, donors, and media) were relied upon more often as key communicators during the civil society movement, and the cooperative efforts and relationships these organizations had with each other resulted in a positive outcome. For example, Tayor and Doerfel (2005) suggested some aspects of the inter-organizational communication relationships model, in which donor organizations should be always available to their grantees for mentoring and guidance, each coalition members must be expected to work closely with other coalitions, and media should be watched closely by civil society organizations.

Likewise, public relations research also needs to explore the effect of IOR created in a specific organizational situation, such as crisis or risk situation. With regard to relationship management theory and crisis communication, it is true that the concept of relationships has not been a main research topic in crisis communication (Ha & Boynton, 2012). Previous studies on crisis communication have focused mainly on identifying the characteristics of crisis that predict the selection of appropriate crisis communication strategies (i.e., studies on crisis type, response type, and crisis responsibility).

However, some crisis scholars (e.g., Birch, 1994; Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Payne, 2006) have focused on how the influence of a previous relationship with corporations might affect the perception of the crisis situation. The crisis scholars considered the relationship variable as an antecedent factor, not an outcome variable. So, they studied how the relationship would affect the public's perception of the crisis itself and the public's acceptance of various crisis response strategies.

These results have found evidence of halo and buffering effects of the relationship. When a crisis occurs, the "credits" accumulated in pre-crisis can buffer the negative impacts. Hence, a positive experience or judgment of an organization can play a role as a buffer against the attribution of organizational responsibility and reputation damage (Birch, 1994; Coombs, 1998; Payne, 2006). For example, in a human-error accident crisis, an unfavorable relationship between an organization and its stakeholders negatively affects organizational reputation and crisis responsibility; meanwhile, a favorable relationship does not (Coombs, 1998, 2002; Coombs & Holladay, 2001). In other words, a good relationship with stakeholders may buffer the reputation damage and attribution of crisis responsibility.

Moreover, a favorable relationship also has a halo effect as a bank account of “goodwill” in a crisis situation (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). In a crisis, for example, once a positive perception of an organization is established, people tend to ignore information contrary to that favorable reputation and are likely to seek messages supporting their beliefs toward the organization (Choi & Lin, 2009; Ha & Ferguson, 2011; Kim, Kim, & Cameron, 2009; Nielsen & Dufresne, 2005).

The Importance of Relationships in Crisis Communication

The concept of relationships has some crucial contributions not only to public relations in general but also to crisis communication specifically. Relationship management theory helps public relations professionals understand management practices including goal setting, program planning, and evaluation (Ledingham, 2003). In this sense, the roles of relationship management in public relations can also exist in crisis communication. Specifically, the concept of relationships can be applied to crisis communication in terms of relevance to, theoretical framework of, and potential contribution to crisis communication (Coombs, 2000).

First, the concept of relationships is closely associated with crisis communication. It is important to understand the concept of relationships and how they are applied to organizational activities and how they fit with crisis communication. Ledingham (2003) said that organizations having good relationships with publics achieve their goals more easily than those not having good relationships. The organizations that do not have good relationships with their publics cannot achieve their goals, at least in part, because their publics are not willing to support the organizations' management efforts. Public opposition to management goals and decisions frequently results in "issues" that may become "crises" (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Thus, developing and maintaining relationships with strategic publics is a crucial component of strategic crisis communication because relationships affect the effectiveness of organizational management, which in turn, influences the ability to address crises or issues.

The second point is a theoretical framework for applying the concept of relationships to crisis communication. A relational approach can provide a coherent perspective from which to analyze crisis episodes (Coombs, 2000). For instance, *Attribution Theory* can be used to explain how the concept of relationships fits to crisis communication. This theory assumes that people are likely to search for the causes of an event – why the event occurred (Weiner, 1985; Wong & Weiner, 1981). People naturally attribute causes to events, particularly failures or unexpected events, in order to cope with them effectively. This is relevant because a crisis is defined as a specific, unpredictable and non-routine organizational event, which may significantly damage an organization's employees, reputation, and high priority goals (Barton, 1993; Fink, 2002; Seeger et al., 2003; Zaremba, 2010).

When people blame an organization for a crisis, they attribute crisis responsibility to the organization based on four causal dimensions of the attribution theory: *external control*, referring to "whether or not some other person can control the cause of the event" (Coombs, 2000, pp.78); *locus of causality*, referring to "whether the cause of the event is something about the actor or something about the situation" (pp.79); *personal* *control,* referring to “whether or not the actor could control the cause of the event” (pp. 79); and *stability*, referring to “the frequency of an event” (pp. 78). Beyond these dimensions of attribution theory, the *relationship history* of the public and organization also provides a value context for interpreting the current crisis (Coombs, 2007). Relationship history is concerned with whether an organization has had good relationships with its publics based on desirable performances and how it has treated its publics in the past. So, the organization may determine the most appropriate crisis response strategy depending on how people perceive the relationship history with the organization (Coombs, 2007).

Third, the concept of relationships can contribute to the study of crisis communication. The relationship can affect not only the development of a crisis itself but also the crisis communication process (Bridge & Nelson, 2000). This means that the relationship can influence the manner in which how publics perceive the crisis. The relationship can also guide communication practitioners about the public’s perception of an organizational crisis, thereby helping them select a proper crisis communication strategy (Lee, 2007). Accordingly, Grunig and Huang’s (2000) notion that public relations is valuable when it contributes to building good relationships with publics supports the importance of a relational approach to crises and its function to help organizations withstand crises.

Despite the importance and attention given to the relationship in crisis communication, there have been few empirical studies that examined the practical effect of the relationship in a crisis situation. As mentioned earlier, previous studies on crisis communication have overlooked the possible influence of OPR on the perception and evaluation of the crisis situation and strategies, not to mention the influence of IOR. When a company faces a crisis, it is supposed to deal with diverse organizations as well as individuals, such as government, media, interest groups, activists, or consumers. One relationship that can be particularly important in a crisis is the organization-counseling agency relationship. The agency is willing to help the organization effectively overcome the crisis. Thus, it can be said that the relationship between an organization (client) and its public relations firm (agency) plays an important role in a crisis situation.

Agency-Client Relationships

Agency–client relationship literature has defined the agency–client relationship, identified a good agency–client relationship, identified factors causing agency–client splits, and compared client perceptions to agency perceptions on specific issues (Henke, 1995). To define the agency-client relationship, *Resource Dependence Theory* (Aldrich, 1976; Lincoln & McBride, 1985) and *Social Exchange Theory* (Cook, 1977; Levine & White, 1961; Liska & Cronkhite, 1995; Roloff, 1981) have been used. These two theories are useful to explain why and under what conditions relationships are formed, maintained, and ended. Under the two theories, the agency-client relationship can be defined as a set of expectations two parties have for each other's behavior based on their interaction patterns (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000).

The resource dependence theory posits that relationships form in response to an organization's need for resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This theory supports the idea that people tend to develop relationships in which profits are maximized. Those relationships are usually maintained as long as rewards exceed costs and terminated when costs become greater than rewards (Boyd, 1990). Likewise, the social exchange theory states that voluntary transactions lead to mutual benefit, as well as to mutual goal achievement (Roloff, 1981). When the expectations one holds for another are met, the relationship endures; when those expectations are not met, one may seek other means for fulfilling expectations (Standford, 2008).

In other words, the formation of relationships occurs when one or both parties have perceptions and expectations of each other, when the parties need resources or knowledge from the other, when the parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment, or when there is a voluntary necessity to associate (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000). Thus, the continuation of an organizational relationship depends on whether those needs and expectations are met. The interaction between agency and client practitioners is a delicately negotiated relationship, with each party hoping to achieve their goals and maintain their organizational status (Berkowitz, 2009).

Seeger (2006) pointed out that effective relationships between crisis practitioners of agency and client are likely to be limited. The agency-client relationship is frequently short-lived because one of the parties quickly becomes dissatisfied with the other (Davies & Prince, 2005). It is not unusual for agency-client relationships to terminate after a year or less (Pincus, Acharya, Trotter, & Michel, 1991). One reason that clients are increasingly less willing to establish long-term relationships with their agencies is that organizations' reliance on outside firms seems to be increasingly more selective. This means that there are many different agencies with which clients are able to have short-term project relationships. However, Fam and Waller (2008) found that client practitioners tend to maintain their current agency when they have a good agency-client relationship.

Relationships are dynamic and are subject to change due to diverse factors in terms of relationship stages, needs, and role expectation between parties (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Davies & Prince, 2005). For example, clients and their agencies may journey through some relationship stages from selection to termination (Waller, 2004), and the agency-client relationship can change over time. Similarly, different situations evoke different expectations and needs. Relationships also differ as task roles expected by a partner are changed. For example, in a crisis, an agency and its client expect each other to function in specific roles. The agency is likely to depend on client practitioners for information and access to the crisis situation, and the client tends to depend on the agency practitioners to get information and networks to communicate with the public (Davies & Prince, 2005).

Likewise, the agency-client relationship can also vary depending on the industrial environment of each country. For instance, in South Korea the public relations industry is growing dramatically. Eight out of the top 10 global public relations firms have entered the Korean public relations market (Park, 2005). Korean public relations firms have enjoyed about 30% growth each year for the last decade (Lee & Kim, 2007). However, the relationship between the agency and client is still a hierarchical relationship where the client is in charge, rather than horizontal partnership. Also, rather than two-way communication systems, the relationship is usually maintained based on one-way communication processes from the client to the agency, which may cause misunderstandings. In fact, Kim, Kim, and Han (2009) found that there is perception gap between Korean public relations practitioners from both the agency and the client sides in terms of agency practitioners' ability and professionalism. For instance, client practitioners tend to underestimate the abilities of agency executives (Kim, Kim, & Han, 2009).

In this sense, Korean agency and client practitioners are hardly expected to have a positive relationship with each other. Rather, there seems to be conflict, low performance quality, and a low level of satisfaction between the agency and its client. As business partners, agency and client practitioners are required to create and maintain a good organizational relationship leading them to get their final goals. Thus, it could be said that understanding how the relationship between a Korean agency and its client operates is important. It is also important to explore how the agency-client relationship contributes to the development of the Korean public relations industry.

Many scholars have tried to identify measurement scales for the agency-client relationship. Fam and Waller (2008) found that trust, honesty, commitment, and closeness are conducive to building a long-term relationship with an agency. Ledingham (2001) tested the Bruning-Ledingham Relationship Scale (e.g., trust, investment, mutuality, openness, honest, and commitment) to see whether it could serve in another context (i.e., personal, community, and professional relationships). They found that the scale is an effective tool for assessing relationships between organizations and community groups, as well as between organizations and individuals. This means that the scales for OPR can be applied to the measurement of IOR.

This study proposes to examine the inter-organizational relationship (between the client and the agency) as an antecedent, not an outcome, in order to explore the effect of relationships in the context of crisis situations. In other words, beyond the relationship between organizations and publics, the current study is focusing on the impact of relationships between organizations, specifically the agency and the client, on the effectiveness of crisis communication in terms of task conflict, performance, and satisfaction.

Organizational Task Conflict

Guetzkow and Gyr (1954) defined conflict as intellectual opposition deriving from the content of an agenda. Task conflict is a perception of disagreements and differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions related to the task (Jehn, 1994, 1995; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Thus, conflict can be conceptualized as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e., individual, group, organization, etc.).

Roloff (1987) noted that organizational task conflict could occur "when members engage in activities that are incompatible with those of colleagues within their network, members of other collectivities, or unaffiliated individuals who utilize the services or products of the organization" (pp. 496). For example, organizational task conflict may occur when a party is required to engage in an activity that is incongruent with its needs or interests, or a party wants some mutually desirable resource that is in short supply. Therefore, the causes of the organizational task conflict are related to organizations' relationships because the concepts of needs, expectation, and mutuality are key factors of formation of relationships.

In fact, a more favorable relationship reduces conflict (Likert & Likert, 1976), and more positive organizational climate reduces the amount of interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflicts experienced by organizational members (Rahim, 1983). LaBahn and Kohli (1997) analyzed working relationships and found that the level of client-agency commitment was negatively associated with task conflict between two groups. Based on the discussion, the first hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: The perceived relationship between the public relations agency and client will be negatively associated with perceived task conflict about crisis management.

Figure 1 presents the proposed research model.

Pincus et al. (1991) noted that the main type of relationship-ending conflict is agency practitioners' deviation from the expectations that client professionals have, which likely stems from the difference in role expectations between agencies and clients. For example, public relations agency practitioners usually play the role of either a communication technician or a broader-based management role or some combination of both, depending on the client's need. However, clients tend to view them as technicians only, and the client may only allow an agency to play a technician role (Acharya, 1985; Broom & Smith, 1979; Smith, 1978). Yet, technical communication services may not be the answer to the client's specific problems. So, the client may be disappointed in the agency's ability, but the client is unable to understand why. This incongruous view may cause a conflict over expectations between client and agency.

In an effort to limit the potential conflict over client and agency role expectations, agencies need to clearly communicate to the client the roles they can and will play during various types of tasks. In addition, the client's expectations should be solicited. Without this understanding, damaging conflict is much more likely (Pincus et al., 1991). Ha (2009) found perception discrepancies in public relations roles between public relations and marketing practitioners. Also, these perception gaps finally affected task conflict between the practitioners (Ha & Kim, 2009). The review of literature on the link of role perception gap and task conflict leads to the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The perceived agreement on crisis communication strategies between the public relations agency and client will be negatively associated with perceived task conflict about crisis management.

Organizational Task Performance

There have been contentions that organizational conflicts might be functional or dysfunctional depending the situation (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000; Robbins, 2000; Rollinson, 2000; Simons, & Peterson, 2000; Stewart, 1981). However, empirical evidence has supported the negative relationship between task conflict and a number of unfavorable organizational outcomes in terms of productivity, adaptability, and flexibility (De Dreu & West, 2001; Gladstein, 1984; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001; Saavedra, Earley, & Van Dyne, 1993; Wall & Nolan, 1986). Task performance in groups and teams has repeatedly been linked to conflict that produces tension, antagonism, and distracts team members from performing the task (Houser & Rizzo, 1972; Rahim, 1983). The findings indicate that in general, task conflict is negatively associated with task performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, Jehn, 1995; Rahim, 2001). Specifically, De Dreu and Weingart's (2003) meta-analysis found that there is a stable and negative relationship between task conflict and performance. Therefore, this study suggests the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The perceived task conflict about crisis management between the public relations agency and client will be negatively associated with perceived task performance of crisis management.

Organizational Task Satisfaction

Public relations research has shown that the elements of relationships, such as investment, commitment, trust, involvement, and openness influenced the public's evaluations of satisfaction (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; Bruning & Ralston, 2000). Mutual satisfaction is one of the variables that can quantify the contribution of relationships to the bottom-line of organizational activities, which means that perceived relationships can affect perceived satisfaction with each other (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999). For example, in student-university relationships, perceived relationships are positively related to students' perceived satisfaction in terms of educational services and values, social experiences, and recreational opportunities (Bruning, 2002). Also, the city-resident relationship influences perceived satisfaction with housing and city services (Bruning, Demiglio, & Embry, 2006).

Business literature also supports the positive linkage between relationships and satisfaction. As tasks performed by individuals become more interrelated, cooperative and supportive relationships with coworkers can influence employee job satisfaction (Ellickson, 2002; Ting, 1997). It means that individuals that had a better relationship with their coworkers are more likely to have a higher level of job satisfaction (Moon & Maxwell, 2004; Yang, Brown, & Moon, 2011). Wackman, Salmon, and Salmon (1986/1987) found that relationship factors were the most significant predictors of a client's satisfaction with its agency. Following this review of the literature, this study suggests the fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: The perceived relationship between the public relations agency and client will be positively associated with perceived task satisfaction of crisis management.

The literature on conflict and team member satisfaction suggests that task conflict should be negatively associated with team member satisfaction (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). De Dreu and Weingart (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of research on the associations between task conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction. They found strong and negative correlations between task conflict and team performance and team member satisfaction, and also found a positive relationship between team performance and team member satisfaction. Following the aforementioned review of the literature, this study posits the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5: The perceived task conflict of crisis management between the public relations agency and client will be negatively associated with perceived task satisfaction of crisis management.

Hypothesis 6: The perceived task performance of crisis management between the public relations agency and client will be positively associated with perceived task satisfaction of crisis management.

The effects of task conflict on task satisfaction have been mixed (DeChurch & Marks, 2001). Task conflict has typically shown a negative relationship with satisfaction for a variety of management and work groups (Jehn, 1997). However, Priem, Harrison, and Muir (1995) found that task conflict actually improved both member acceptance of group decisions and overall group satisfaction. This evidence indicates that there could be moderators in the linkage of conflict-satisfaction.

Additionally, it is important to note that task conflict might have positive effects on performance and satisfaction given particular types of groups or tasks (Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995; Schwenk, 1990), and that an intermediate level of conflict may optimize task performance (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). There has been a growing tendency in the literature to assume that the benefits of task conflict may be contingent on a variety of factors, such as trust and understanding, which are elements of relationships (Simons and Peterson, 2000).

The presence of not only the links among relationships, agreement perception, and task conflict, but also the effects of task conflict on performance and satisfaction implies that task conflict may mediate the effects of relationships and agreement perception on task performance and satisfaction. In other words, the agency-client relationship and task conflict ultimately have implications for task performance and satisfaction, which introduces task conflict as another group-process related mechanism by which the relationship and agreement perception can influence task performance and satisfaction. As we have already predicted the effects of the relationship and agreement perception on conflict, and the effects of task conflict on task performance and satisfaction, it could be hypothesized that conflict fully or partially mediates the effect of these interactions.

Given this, the present study hypothesizes the indirect effect of the agency-client relationship and agreement perception on task performance and satisfaction, through task conflict:

Hypothesis 7: The effect of perceived relationship between the public relations agency and client on perceived task performance will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

Hypothesis 8: The effect of perceived relationship between the public relations agency and client on perceived task satisfaction will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

Hypothesis 9: The effect of perceived agreement perception between the public relations agency and client on perceived task performance will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

Hypothesis 10: The effect of perceived agreement perception between the public relations agency and client on perceived task satisfaction will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

In sum, this study attempts to examine how both the agency-client relationship and agreement perception affect crisis communication effectiveness in terms of reducing crisis-related task conflict and increasing crisis-related task performance and satisfaction.

To do so, it suggests ten hypotheses: six hypotheses for direct effects and four for indirect effects. Data were gathered from both agency and client practitioners and were analyzed quantitatively. The next section discusses research methods for data collection and analyses.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Survey Procedure

To measure people's opinions about a specific issue or topic, sample surveys are considered an efficient and useful tool (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). For example, collecting data from a few hundred respondents selected randomly from a population can predict real thoughts of the whole population within 5 percentage errors (Dillman et al., 2009). Web surveys are useful for obtaining feedback on issues from a specific, preselected community, such as a list serve (Beck, Yan, & Wang, 2009). Although there have been contentions about the response rates of web surveys, recent studies have revealed that, when certain conditions are met (e.g., pre-notice letters and incentives), web surveys can yield response rates comparable to mail surveys (Chen & Goodson, 2010; Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000; Denscombe, 2009; Israel, 2009; Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004). Also, web surveys have some advantages over mail surveys because they save costs and reduce non-response errors (Denscombe, 2009; Deutskens, Jong, de Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2006; Greenlaw, & Brown-Wlety, 2009).

Sample

The population of this study is Korean public relations practitioners, 1) who are working at public relations agency or client organizations, 2) who have experienced crisis management projects, and 3) who are enrolled in a public relations association in 2012, i.e., Korea Public Relations Association (KPRA). Using a probability-sampling method, an online survey was employed to collect data.

The ideal sample size is subject to change depending not only on the size of the population from which the samples are drawn, but also on a confidence level and margin of error (Dillman et al., 2009). To determine the number of respondents needed for this study, a formula, $N_S = [(N_P)(P)(1\text{-}P)] / [(N_P\text{-}1)(B/C)^2\text{-}(P)(1\text{-}P)]$ was used (Dillman et al., 2009). N_S refers to the sample size needed for the size of the survey population. N_P is the number of people in the survey population from which the sample is to be drawn. The number of members of KPRA is about 35,000, according to its officer. P is the proportion of the population expected to choose one of the two response categories. The term $(P)(1\text{-}P)$ was set at the most conservative value possible with a 50/50 split. B represents margin of error, and was set within ± 3 percentage points. C is the corresponding Z score associated with the confidence level, and was set at 95%, which yielded C = 1.96. Thus, for a question with a 50/50 split in a population of 35,000 people, a completed sample size of 380 cases is needed to be sure that the estimate of interest will be within ± 3 percentage points 95% of the time.

Also, the sample size required to provide unbiased estimates and accurate model fit information for structural equation modeling (SEM) depends on model characteristics. However, a general rule of thumb is that the minimum sample size should be no less than

200 or 5-20 times of the number of parameters to be estimated, whichever is larger (Lei & Wu, 2007). In this study, there are 63 parameters to be estimated, which suggests that the sample size should fall between 315 and 1,260. In this sense, the researcher desired to collect at least 400 public relations practitioners for this study.

Web Survey

A survey was conducted exclusively on the Internet using a web platform, Qualtrics. The Internet is a useful mode for conducting surveys targeted at very specific populations such as college students and certain professionals (Dillman et al., 2009). It is also true that using a mixed-mode and offering a second or even third mode to non-respondents can improve response rates and reduce error by getting responses from people who may be difficult to reach via the first mode of data collection (Groves, 2006). However, conducting mixed-mode surveys also raises the fundamental question of whether reductions in coverage and nonresponse error may be offset by increase in measurement error when data collected from different modes are combined or compared (Dillman et al., 2009).

Therefore, when possible, researchers should collect data by only one mode to avoid introducing measurement error due to mode differences. Also, some studies found that offering people a choice of survey mode might not result in an overall improvement in response (Dillman, Clark, & West, 1994; Dillman, Smyth, Christian, & O'Neill, 2008; Gentry, 2008; Griffin, Fischer, & Morgan, 2001; Grigorian & Hoffer, 2008). This is why this study exclusively used a single mode of the web survey with multiple contacts and cash incentive.

Multi Contacts

When conducting web survey applications alone, a mail pre-notice is recommended to increase response rates (Dillman et al., 2009). According to one meta-analysis, a web survey application has achieved a response rate comparable to a mail hard copy questionnaire when the web survey was preceded by an advance mail notification (Kaplowitz et al., 2004).

In fact, the number of contacts, personalized contacts, and pre-contacts are the dominant factors affecting response rates (Cook et al., 2000). In this sense, multiple contacts via e-mail and postal mail were used for the present study. First, a standard pre-notice e-mail letter was initially sent to randomly selected samples by the officer of KAPR. One week later, the samples received a postal mail invitation letter including the web survey URL and instructions. Finally, one week later, a reminder e-mail letter was sent to non-respondents. Appendix A, B, and C provide the pre-notice, invitation, and reminder letters.

Cash Incentive

Incentives reduce nonresponse errors by pulling in respondents who otherwise might not answer the questionnaire (Lesser, Dillman, Carlson, Lorenz, Mason, & Willits, 2001). Furthermore, among many types of incentives, a cash incentive is likely to yield higher response rates than any other incentives. For example, Warriner, Goyder, Gjertsen, Hohner, and McSpurren (1996) found a response rate of 73% for the cash incentive, 58% for the lottery, and 53% for no incentive. Following previous studies' results, this study provided each participant with small cash incentive, 2,000 Korea won, which is equivalent to two U.S. dollars.

Measurement

Exogenous variables, which are analogous to independent variables, in the model of this study are *relationship* and *agreement perception*. Endogenous variables, which are analogous to dependent variables, are *task conflict, task performance,* and *task satisfaction*. The *task conflict* and *task performance* variables are both exogenous and endogenous variables in this model. These five latent variables were measured using multiple indicators studied by previous research. In fact, a single indicator is susceptible to measurement error. So, using multiple measures of each construct can reduce the effect of measurement errors in any individual indicator, which implies that scores across a set of measures tend to be more reliable and valid than scores on any individual measure (Kline, 2005). Each of question items was measured on seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with the exception of the items for agreement perception, which were scaled from 1 (strongly different) to 7 (strongly alike). Appendix D provides the full web survey questionnaire.

Agency-Client Relationships

The status of agency-client relationships is operationally defined as the degree to which the agency and the client perceive their relationships as trustworthy, committed, and controlled mutually. The measures of relationships were based largely on Hon and Grunig's (1999) guidelines. The relationship variable has three sub-latent variables – trust, commitment, and control mutuality. Each variable has three question items. The *trust* variable includes, "My client/agency can be relied on to keep its promises," "My client/agency has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do," and "My client/agency does not mislead my company." The *commitment* variable consists of "I can see that my client/agency wants to maintain a long-term commitment to my company," "There is a long-lasting bond between my client/agency and my company," and "I feel a sense of loyalty to my client/agency." Also, the *control mutuality* variable has "My client/agency believes my opinions are legitimate," "When I have an opportunity to interact with my client/agency, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation," and "I believe I have influence on the decision-makers of my client/agency."

Agreement on Perception of Crisis Strategies

The level of agreement on perception of crisis communication strategies is defined as the degree to which agency and client perceive that they possess the same opinion about each statement of crisis communication strategies. To measure this agreement perception, practitioners were asked to rate the questionnaire item based on previous studies on crisis communication strategies suggested by crisis stage models (e.g., Coombs, 2012; Ray, 1999; Seeger et al., 2003; Ulmer, 2001). The questionnaire consists of three categories, which include pre-crisis, during-crisis, and *post-crisis* communication strategies, each of which has two items. The pre-crisis communication strategy items consist of "An organization should have a crisis communication plan and crisis manual," and "A crisis communication manual should be update and revised regularly." The *during-crisis* communication strategy items include "Once a crisis happens, an organization should announce its opinion and plan for the crisis through mass media as soon as possible," and "Once a crisis happens, an organization should disclose information about the crisis through mass media as soon as possible.” The *post-crisis* communication strategy items have “Post-crisis communication strategy should focus mostly on rebuilding relationships with the public” and “Post-crisis communication strategy should focus mostly on repairing image and reputation damages of an organization.”

Task Conflict

Task conflict refers to agency and client practitioners’ perceived task conflicts toward their partners. Four items from Rahim’s (1983) and Jehn’s (1995) studies were used to measure the degree of conflict the agency and client practitioners perceive. They include “My client/agency withholds information necessary for the attainment of my company tasks,” “There is lack of mutual assistance between my client/agency and my company,” “There are personality clashes between my client/agency and my company,” and “My client/agency creates problems for my company.”

Task Performance

Task performance refers to the quality of crisis management by both the agency and the client. It was measured by ratings of the final reports of crisis management. Crisis evaluation checklists (i.e., Barton, 2001; Coombs, 2012; Seeger et al., 2003; Zaremba, 2010) were used as question items to gauge the task performance of agency and client practitioners together. The questions include “We effectively prepared the crisis,” “Our crisis communication strategies did work well,” “Overall, we dealt well with the crisis,” “Our crisis management contributed to minimizing the damage created by the crisis.”

Task Satisfaction

Task satisfaction refers to the degree to which agency and client practitioners are satisfied with task outcomes produced by their partners. It was measured using the four-item scale introduced by Priem et al. (1995). These items are, “Working with my client/agency has been an enjoyable experience,” “I would like to work with my client/agency in the future,” “My client/agency meets our needs,” and “I am satisfied with the performance of my client/agency.”

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

To test the hypotheses of this study, statistical techniques are needed for multivariate data analysis combining aspects of multiple regression and factor analysis to simultaneously estimate a series of interrelated relationships. In this sense, SEM is an appropriate statistical method for the model analysis in that can be used to study the relationships among latent constructs that are indicated by multiple measures (Lei & Wu, 2007). Furthermore, SEM is able to accommodate measurement error directly into the estimation of a series of dependent relationships, unlike multiple regressions (Kline, 2005). The statistical package used for model estimation was AMOS 18.0. The estimation method was full information maximum likelihood. To assess data-model fit, Brown and Cudeck's (1993), Hu and Bentler's (1999), and Kline's (2005) criteria for model fit indices were employed.

Descriptive Statistics

A web survey was conducted from December 15, 2012, to January 14, 2013. Initially, 1,800 randomly selected public relations practitioners were given both e-mail and postal letters asking the practitioners to participate in the web survey. For screening purposes, the 1,800 practitioners were asked to answer three questions: 1) Have you ever handled organizational crisis communication or management?; 2) What is your current or most recent professional environment?; and 3) Has your company ever hired public relations agencies?

Of the 1,800 practitioners, 829 (46.05%) answered yes, 512 (28.44%) no, and 459 (25.51%) did not respond to the first question. Thus, the initial cooperation rate was 74.50%. Again, of the 829 practitioners, 296 (35.70%) work at an agency, 261 (31.48%) at client, and 272 (32.82%) at neither. From this response, the secondary cooperation rate was 63.45%. At this step, agency respondents proceeded to the main survey, and 246 out of the 296 agency respondents completed a full questionnaire. The third question was given to the client practitioners. Of the 261 respondents, 230 (88.12%) answered they have co-worked with an agency, and 31 (11.88%) have not. At this step, the 230 respondents proceeded to the main survey and 189 out of the 230 client respondents completed the full questionnaire. Finally, 435 questionnaires were ultimately collected, all of which were usable for the study. Thus, the final completion rates among screened respondents were 83.11% for agency respondents and 82.17% for client respondents.

According to the result of Mahalanobis distance test, two cases appeared as outliers (see Table 2). First, given the wide gap in Mahalanobis d^2 values between Case 330 and the second case (179), relative to all other cases, Case 330 was judged to be an outlier and was deleted from further analyses. Also, based on the same comparison rationale, the next case, 179, was deleted. Finally, the data from 433 participants were used for this study.

The respondents were 245 (56.6%) agency practitioners and 188 (43.4%) client practitioners. Respondents' gender was 234 (54.0%) male and 199 (46.0%) female. Average age was 32.17 years (SD = 7.59), ranging from 19 years to 63 years. Respondents' educational background included 14 (3.2%) high school; 285 (65.8%) undergraduate; 102 (23.6%) master graduate; 11 (2.5%) Ph.D. graduate; and 21 (4.8%) did not say. The respondents have averagely worked 11.1 years (SD = 1.32), ranging from 1 year to 38 years.

Preliminary Analyses

Before undertaking the main analysis, a series of descriptive analyses were conducted. Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations of key variables and the correlations between each variable. In preliminary analyses, the researcher also checked not only important SEM assumptions in terms of univariate and multivariate normality and multicollinearity, but also construct reliability in terms of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), composite reliability (CR) coefficient, and average variance extracted (AVE).

Assumptions

First, the sample (N=433) data were univariate and multivariate normal. Overall, the univariate assessment of skew and kurtosis was good. Neither absolute values of the skew index greater than 3.0 nor kurtosis index greater than 10.0 were found. Mardia's coefficient (208.279) of these sample data was smaller than the cut-off point of 624, which can be calculated from the formula of $p\ (p+2)$, where p indicates the number of observed variables (N = 24). This means that the assessment of multivariate normality met SEM assumptions. Second, Pearson correlations for variables revealed significantly positive and negative associations from .096 to .775 (see Table 3), all of which are below the absolute value of .85, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a problem.

Construct Reliability

Construct reliability refers to the percentage of variance that represents the true concept. First, a series of principal components analyses with Varimax rotation was used to explore the dimension in terms of each construct. Table 4 reports the factor loadings and reliability information. Items were retained if they had eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Howell, 2010). An examination of the eigenvalues and scree plot suggested two factors for the *relationship* construct, accounting for 70.50% of the variance. One-factor solutions were confirmed on other constructs: *agreement perception*, accounting for 56.36%; *perceived conflict*, accounting for 64.53%; *perceived performance*, accounting for 72.29%; and *perceived satisfaction*, accounting for 77.82%, respectively.

The researcher initially expected that the *relationship* construct would be grouped into three factors – trust, commitment, and control mutuality. Also, it was anticipated that the *agreement perception* construct would be divided into three factors – pre-, during, and post-. However, the results suggested the extraction of two factors for the *relationship* construct and one factor for the *agreement perception* construct.

With regard to the *relationship* construct, the first factor includes five items – "My client/agency can be relied on to keep its promises," "My client/agency has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do," "My client/agency does not mislead my company," "I can see that my client/agency wants to maintain a long-term commitment to me," and "There is a long-lasting bond between my client/agency and my group" – and was labeled *trusting relationship*. The second factor, *mutual relationship*, consists of four items – "I feel a sense of loyalty to my client/agency," "My client/agency believes my opinions are legitimate," "When I have an opportunity to interact with my client/agency, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation," and "I believe I have influence on the decision-makers of my client/agency."

To identify and exclude poor questions from the original set, Hayes, Glynn, and Shanahan's (2005) criteria were used. First, questions with especially small initial communalities in a principal axis factor analysis (< .70) were excluded. Second, when including a question in the final scale substantially lowered Cronbach's alpha relative to when it was excluded the question was deleted. These criteria resulted in the exclusion of 3 questions – Rel5 ("There is a long-lasting bond between my client/agency and my group"), Rel6 ("I feel a sense of loyalty to my client/agency"), and Perc6 ("Post-crisis communication strategy should focus mostly on repairing image and reputation damages of an organization," see Table 4).

In addition, to crosscheck the construct reliability, CR coefficients and AVE were calculated after deleting the three items (see Table 5). As the measure of scale reliability, CR assesses the internal consistency of a measure by using the formula, $(\Sigma\ \textit{standardized loading})^2 / [(\Sigma\ \textit{standardized loading})^2 + (\Sigma\ \textit{measurement error})]$ (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). AVE is the variance in the indicators explained by the common factor, which is calculated by the formula of $\Sigma\ (\textit{standardized loading}^2) / n$, where n is the number of question items of the factor (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). CR should be equal to or greater than .70 and AVE should be greater than .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2006). The results revealed that *perceived conflict*'s CR is .693 and *agreement perception*'s AVE is .440. However, they could be marginally accepted (Tseng, Rnyei, & Schmitt, 2006).

Measurement Model (CFA)

The measurement model is visualized in Figure 2. Byrne (2005) suggested that a typical combination of the evaluative criteria for CFA estimation might include χ^2 value, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) along with its 90% confidence interval, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). A rule of thumb for a well-fitting model requires a CFI value equal to or greater than .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), a RMSEA value of less than .08 (Brown & Cudeck, 1993), and a SRMR value of less than .10 (Kline, 2005).

The measurement model was estimated and the result indicated a satisfactory fit, $\chi^2 = 565.093$, $df = 235$, $p < .001$, CFI = .947, RMSEA = .057 (90% CI: .051-.063), SRMR = .052. For model modification, the researcher added two error covariances among the observed items within the same subscale (i.e., e8-e9, e10-e11) of which the coefficients were $r = .506$ for e8-e9, and $r = .528$ for e10-e11 (see Figure 2). In fact, e8 and e9 are the error terms of items for pre-crisis strategies, and e10 and e11 are the error terms of items for during-crisis strategies. Therefore, it is reasonable to let these error terms covary with each other. Also, in the measurement model, no standardized residual covariances over 2.58 were found, which means there were no “strains” suggesting misestimated covariances in the model. The standardized factor loadings in the model were substantive, in the right direction, and statistically significant (see Table 6).

Construct Validity

As mentioned earlier, construct reliability assesses "how much statistical error or noise a measurement instrument produces" (Hayes et al., 2005, pp. 309). On the other hand, construct validity concerns whether a set of question items "is serving its function as a measure of what we claim" (pp. 309). To test for construct validity, the researcher examined two kinds of validity. One is convergent validity, the extent to which the measure is associated with other theoretical constructs. The other is discriminant validity, the extent to which the measure is distinct from other theoretical constructs.

Convergent Validity

The correlations between six constructs were assessed by treating them as latent variables (i.e., trusting relationship (TR) & mutual relationship (MR), TR & perception, TR & conflict, etc.). This means that two constructs are specified in the measurement model, with their question items as indicators in each scale loading only on their respective latent variables. Crossloadings were not allowed. The factor variances were fixed to 1 and each factor loading was freely estimated. Thus, the covariance between the factors was equal to the correlations between the latent variables. The results of the correlation pattern showed that all constructs were associated with reasonable directions as predicted, which indicates the evidence of convergent validity. Table 7 reports the pattern of correlations.

Discriminant Validity

According to the construct's correlation matrix (see Table 7), four pairs' correlations were significantly high (i.e., .692 between TR and MR; .719 between TR and SAT; .681 between MR and SAT; and .719 between PERF and SAT), relative to other correlations. This indicates the possibility that the two constructs might measure the same concept. To assess discriminant validity of these four pairs, a χ^2 difference test between a single-factor model and two-factor model was conducted such as confirmatory factor analysis. For example, if the TR scale and the MR scale measure different concepts, a single-factor model (constrained model), where the four TR indicators and the three MR indicators are forced to load on a single factor, should not result in a substantial reduction in fit, compared to a two-factor model (unconstrained model), where the indicators are forced to load only on their respective factors. As the single-factor solution is a nested model of the two-factor solution, their model fit can be compared statistically with a χ^2 difference test with one degree of freedom (Kline, 2005). Also, the single- and two-factor models were compared descriptively using standard measures of fit, such as CFI and RMSEA.

Four such analyses were undertaken to distinguish each of the pairs described above. As can be seen in Table 8, in every case the two-factor model fit the data better than a single-factor model, with a significant improvement in the χ^2. Furthermore, the CFI was always larger and RMSEA always smaller for the two-factor model. Thus, all the latent constructs were statistically distinguishable from each other, which means that discriminant validity was achieved.

Structural Model

In the initial research model, there were two higher-order factors with three sub-factors (i.e., *relationship* and *agreement perception*). However, the *relationship* construct turned out two factors and the *agreement perception* construct appeared as a single factor. Furthermore, the two factors of *relationship* construct (i.e., *trusting relationship* and *mutual relationship*) showed discriminant validity, so they should be considered as mutually distinctive constructs.

Therefore, the hypotheses regarding the *relationship* construct should be divided into two separate hypotheses in terms of two constructs, *trusting relationship* and *mutual relationship*. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1, 4, 7, and 8 were changed as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: The perceived "trusting relationship" between the public relations agency and client will be negatively associated with perceived task conflict about crisis management.

Hypothesis 1b: The perceived "mutual relationship" between the public relations agency and client will be negatively associated with perceived task conflict about crisis management.

Hypothesis 4a: The perceived "trusting relationship" between the public relations agency and client will be positively associated with perceived task satisfaction of crisis management.

Hypothesis 4b: The perceived "mutual relationship" between the public relations agency and client will be positively associated with perceived task satisfaction of crisis management.

Hypothesis 7a: The effect of perceived "trusting relationship" between the public relations agency and client on perceived task performance will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

Hypothesis 7b: The effect of perceived "mutual relationship" between the public relations agency and client on perceived task performance will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

Hypothesis 8a: The effect of perceived "trusting relationship" between the public relations agency and client on perceived task satisfaction will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

Hypothesis 8b: The effect of perceived "mutual relationship" between the public relations agency and client on perceived task satisfaction will be mediated by perceived task conflict.

Based on these facts, the initial research model should be changed. The new research model is visualized in Figure 3.

Research Model Fits and Modification

To assess the fit of the new structural model, a nested model comparison was conducted with a χ^2 difference test between the new research model and the measurement model. As the two models are nested in each other, a χ^2 difference test is appropriate. The χ^2 value of the structural model was 725.218, $df = 239$. The χ^2 value of the measurement model was 565.093, $df = 235$. Thus, the χ^2 difference is statistically significant, $\Delta\chi^2 = 160.125$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$. This result suggests that the structural model could use some improvement.

However, it should be noted that researchers should consider two criteria at the same time when modifying a model (Kline, 2005). In other words, the model should be re-specified not only on the basis of statistical criteria (e.g., improved model fit), but also on the basis of theoretical considerations. Use of statistical criteria alone can result in illogical models. Therefore, model modification must be conducted on the basis of theory guided by statistical considerations. Also, if there is a need for path deletion, dropping every path that is not statistically significant from the model is not a good idea because removing such paths may affect the overall solution in an important way (Kline, 2005).

Looking at the modification indices and the patterns of correlations, the researcher added two paths from the *trusting relationship* and the *mutual relationship* latent variables to the *task performance* latent variable. The theoretical rationales for these path additions are further presented in the discussion section of chapter 5. However, the researcher did not delete two nonsignificant paths because there was little reasonable evidence to support the deletion of those paths. Finally, the modified model was developed (see Figure 4).

Accordingly, four hypotheses regarding the direct and indirect effects of *trusting relationship* and *mutual relationship* on *perceived task performance* and *satisfaction* were added as follows:

Hypothesis 11a: The perceived trusting relationship between the public relations agency and client will be positively associated with perceived task performance of crisis management.

Hypothesis 11b: The perceived mutual relationship between the public relations agency and client will be positively associated with perceived task performance of crisis management.

Hypothesis 12a: The effect of perceived trusting relationship between the public relations agency and client on perceived task satisfaction will be mediated by perceived task performance.

Hypothesis 12b: The effect of perceived mutual relationship between the public relations agency and client on perceived task satisfaction will be mediated by perceived task performance.

Modified Research Model Fits

To assess the model fit of the revised structural model, a χ^2 difference test was also conducted between the new model and the modified model because the two models are nested in each other. If the χ^2 difference test indicates a non-significant difference between the new and the modified models, a more parsimonious model (the new model) should be chosen.

However, the result revealed evidence favorable to the revised model. The χ^2 difference is statistically significant, $\Delta\chi^2 = -154.875$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$. Also, the overall model fit well: $\chi^2 = 570.343$, $df = 237$, $p < .001$, CFI = .947, RMSEA = .057 (90% CI: .051-.063), SRMR = .054. Finally, research hypotheses were tested using the modified research model.

Hypotheses Test

Because the modified model was selected as the better model, the results of the hypotheses tests using this model are reported in this section (see Table 9 and Figure 4).

Direct Effects

H1a: Effects of trusting relationship on perceived task conflict. As the path H1a in Figure 4 indicates, there was no significant association between the trusting relationship and perceived task conflict about crisis management, $\beta = -.114$, *ns*. This suggests that the trusting relationship between the public relations agency and the client does not influence the level of task conflict about crisis management that the agency and the client perceive.

H1b: Effects of mutual relationship on perceived task conflict. As the path H1b in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was supported, $\beta = -.340$, $p < .001$. The better the mutual relationship between the public relations agency and the client, the less the parties perceive task conflict about crisis management.

H2: Effects of agreement perception of crisis management strategies on perceived task conflict. As the path H2 in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was not supported, $\beta = .143$, $p < .05$. Unlike the direction of the hypothesis, the more the agency and the client perceive agreement on crisis management strategies, the more they perceive task conflict about crisis management.

H3: Effects of perceived task conflict on perceived task performance. As the path H3 in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was not supported, $\beta = -.008$, *ns*. This suggests that task conflict between the agency and the client does not affect the level of task performance that they estimate.

H4a: Effects of the trusting relationship on perceived task satisfaction. As the path H4a in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was supported, $\beta = .375$, $p < .001$. This suggests that the better the trusting relationship between the agency and the client, the more they perceive task satisfaction with crisis management.

H4b: Effects of the mutual relationship on perceived task satisfaction. As the path H4b in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was supported, $\beta = .156$, $p < .05$. This suggests that the better the mutual relationship between the agency and the client, the more they perceive task satisfaction with crisis management.

H5: Effects of perceived task conflict on perceived task satisfaction. As the path H5 in Figure 4 indicates, there was no significant association between perceived task conflict and perceived task satisfaction with crisis management between the agency and the client, $\beta = -.042$, *ns*. This suggests that task conflict between the agency and the client does not affect the level of task satisfaction that they perceive.

H6: Effects of perceived task performance on perceived task satisfaction. As the path H6 in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was supported, $\beta = .403$, $p < .001$. This suggests that the higher the agency and the client estimate perceived task performance of crisis management, the more they perceive task satisfaction.

H11a: Effects of the trusting relationship on perceived task performance. As the path H11a in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was supported, $\beta = .242$, $p < .001$. This suggests that the better the trusting relationship between the agency and the client, the higher they estimate perceived task performance of crisis management.

H11b: Effects of the mutual relationship on perceived task performance. As the path H11b in Figure 4 indicates, this hypothesis was supported, $\beta = .451$, $p < .001$. This suggests that the better the mutual relationship between the agency and the client, the higher they estimate perceived task performance of crisis management.

Indirect Effects

This model contained indirect effects of the trusting relationship, the mutual relationship, agreement perception, and task conflict on task performance and task satisfaction. To test for these indirect effects, the researcher utilized both the product of coefficients method (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007) and analysis of multiple mediator model using phantom variables (Cheung, 2007; Macho & Ledermann, 2011; Rindskopf, 1984). For indirect effect analyses, bootstrapping procedures were employed using 2,000 bootstrap samples and a bias-corrected confidence with a 95% confidence interval. The bootstrapping approach is a very typical way to evaluate indirect effects because it makes no assumptions about the shape of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect, and no standard error is needed to make the inference (Hayes, 2009). Also, it can be used for making inferences about indirect effects in any intervening variable model, regardless of how complex and how numerous the paths between variables (Williams & MacKinnon, 2008).

These analyses estimated each specific indirect effect of eight hypotheses. Table 10 presents the results of the indirect effects from the product of coefficients method and the analysis of the multiple mediator model.

H7a: Indirect effects of the trusting relationship on perceived task performance through perceived task conflict. The results of the test, presented in Table 10, demonstrated a non-significant indirect effect between the trusting relationship on perceived task performance, coefficient = 2.282, β = -.011, *ns*. Thus, H7a was not supported.

H7b: Indirect effects of the mutual relationship on perceived task performance through perceived task conflict. The results of the test, presented in Table 10, demonstrated a nonsignificant indirect effect between the mutual relationship on perceived task performance, coefficient = 1.646, β = -.032, *ns*. Thus, H7b was not supported.

H8a: Indirect effects of the trusting relationship on perceived task satisfaction through perceived task conflict. The results of the test, presented in Table 10, revealed a nonsignificant indirect effect. The indirect effect of the trusting relationship on perceived task satisfaction was nonsignificant: coefficient = 2.968, β = -.004, *ns*. Thus, H8a was not supported.

H8b: Indirect effects of the mutual relationship on perceived task satisfaction through perceived task conflict. The results of the test, presented in Table 10, revealed a nonsignificant indirect effect. The indirect effect of the mutual relationship on perceived task satisfaction was nonsignificant: coefficient = 2.793, β = -.012, *ns*. Thus, H8b was not supported.

H9: Indirect effects of agreement perception on perceived task performance through perceived task conflict. The results of the test, presented in Table 10, demonstrated a nonsignificant indirect effect between agreement perception on perceived task performance, coefficient = .631, β = -.026, *ns*. Thus, H9 was not supported.

H10: Indirect effects of agreement perception on perceived task satisfaction through perceived task conflict. The results of the test, presented in Table 10, demonstrated a nonsignificant indirect effect between agreement perception on perceived task satisfaction, coefficient = .633, β = -.042, *ns*. Thus, H10 was not supported.

H12a: Indirect effects of the trusting relationship on perceived task satisfaction through perceived task performance. As presented in Table 10, the analysis revealed a significant indirect effect between the trusting relationship and perceived task satisfaction, coefficient = 8.362, β = .033, $p < .01$. Thus, H12a was supported.

H12b: Indirect effects of the mutual relationship on perceived task satisfaction through perceived task performance. As presented in Table 10, the analysis revealed a significant indirect effect between the mutual relationship and perceived task satisfaction, coefficient = 8.692, β = .091, $p < .01$. Thus, H12b was supported.

In addition, the indirect effect in the paths from the trusting relationship to perceived task satisfaction (β = -.005) through perceived task conflict and performance was not significant at $p < .05$. The indirect effect in the paths from the mutual relationship to perceived task satisfaction (β = -.016) through perceived task conflict and performance was not significant at $p < .05$. The indirect effect in the paths from agreement perception to perceived task satisfaction (β = -.013) through perceived task conflict and performance was not significant at $p < .05$. Table 11 presents the results of the indirect effects.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Results

The main purpose of this dissertation was to examine the effects of the agency-client relationship and agreement perception of crisis strategies on crisis-related task conflict, performance, and satisfaction, as well as the critical mediation roles of task conflict and performance on such effects. The results of this study revealed that two relationship variables (*trusting* and *mutual* relationships) had statistically significant effects on all three endogenous variables (*perceived task conflict, performance, and satisfaction*) as an expected direction, except for the effect of *trusting relationship* on *perceived task conflict*. *Agreement perception* positively affected *perceived task conflict*, which is inconsistent with the direction of the hypothesis. This research found no direct effects of *perceived task conflict* on *perceived task performance* and *satisfaction*.

With regard to indirect effects, two indirect effects of *trusting relationship* and *mutual relationship* on *perceived task satisfaction* through *perceived task performance* were statistically significant. However, *trusting* and *mutual* relationships' indirect effects on *perceived task satisfaction* through *perceived task conflict* were not statistically significant. In addition, according to the results of EFA and CFA, two factors (trust and control mutuality) were extracted for the relationship construct, and a single factor was yielded for the agreement perception construct. The results of this study provide following critical implications for both scholars and practitioners in public relations and crisis communication.

Theoretical Implications

This study found that the relationship between the agency and client could play a role as an antecedent factor in a crisis situation, which is consistent with the results of previous research results that examined the relationship between an organization and the public (e.g., Birch, 1994; Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Payne, 2006). Research suggests that when organizations have good relationships with the public, the public is more likely to accept the organizations' response messages and less likely to attribute crisis responsibility to the organizations. The present study suggests that the agency-client relationship, as one type of inter-organizational relationships (IOR), should be considered as important as the organization-public relationships (OPR) in a crisis situation.

Additionally, the results of the present study suggest that the effects of relationships could vary depending on the type and quality of relationships. In fact, the mutual relationship was negatively associated with perceived task conflict, but the trusting relationship was not. Also, the mutual relationship's effect on perceived task performance was greater than the trusting relationship's effect. On the other hand, the trusting relationship's effect on perceived satisfaction was larger than the mutual relationship's effect.

Interestingly, one of the important findings of this study was the significant effect of a trusting relationship and a mutual relationship on perceived task performance. This finding is in line with the claim made by Bennett (1999), Henke (1995), and Labahn and Kohli (1997), which suggested that an agency's performance was positively associated with a client's level of trust in and commitment to its agency. Also, Fam and Waller

(2008) insisted that the client’s estimation of the relationship quality (e.g., trust) with its advertising agency and the agency’s performance (e.g., creative ability) could influence satisfaction with the agency, which is a crucial criterion to determine whether the business contract should be extended.

With regard to perceived task performance’s mediating effect, the indirect effects of both the trusting relationship and mutual relationship on perceived task satisfaction were mediated by perceived task performance. This is consistent with the results of previous studies on the role of task performance. Fam and Waller (2008) found that both the agency and the client were satisfied with each other when the final task performance was good, even if their relationships during the task process was not good. This result could be supported by the fact that the relationship between agency and client is usually based on a business contract promising mutual benefits from excellent job performance (Broom & Sha, 2013).

However, this study revealed that perceived task conflict had no indirect effects among trusting relationship, the mutual relationship, and perceived task satisfaction. This suggests that perceived task performance has a more significant mediating role between the agency-client relationship and perceived task satisfaction than does perceived task conflict.

Also, this result forced the researcher to test further whether perceived task conflict could moderate the effects of trusting relationship and mutual relationship on perceived task performance and satisfaction. The need for this test was based on literature of conflict effects, which notes that conflict may have a positive or negative effect depending on its intensity (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997;Deutsch, 1973; Jehn, 1995).

As shown in Table 12, perceived task conflict had a significant moderating effect between the trusting relationship and perceived task performance. In other words, the effect of trusting relationship on perceived task performance declines when level of perceived task conflict is high between the agency and client, and the effect of trusting relationship on perceived task performance increases when level of perceived task conflict between the agency and client is low.

However, it should be noted that there are contentions about determining the optimized level of conflict that can contribute to performance. It is clear that an intermediate level of conflict strengthens performance more than too much conflict or too little conflict (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). This indicates that some degree of conflict between the agency and client is healthy, but the challenge comes from finding and managing the appropriate balance between the two parties. Some suggestions about the ways to optimize the degree of conflict are discussed in the practical implication section.

Regarding the factors of the *relationship* construct, this study found that Korean public relations practitioners recognize two factors (i.e., trust and control mutuality) rather than three factors (i.e., trust, control mutuality, and commitment), which means that Korean public relations practitioners are not likely to differentiate the concept of commitment from trust and control mutuality. This finding is inconsistent with a number of past studies on relationship factors (e.g., Fam & Waller, 2008; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2001; Ledingham et al., 1997). An explanation for this finding may be that the difference may have stemmed from cultural differences between U.S. and South Korea. In fact, relationship measurement items used in this study had been tested and developed using American people including the general public, students, professors, and practitioners.

Hofstede's (2001, 1997) research shows that national cultures may influence organizational cultures. The two countries demonstrate different national and organizational cultures in terms of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, and masculinity vs. femininity. For example, the United States' national culture is described as having low power distance, low uncertainty, high individualism, and high masculinity (Hofstede, 2001, 1997). Accordingly, U.S. people are less "willing to accept an unequal distribution of power, wealth and prestige" and "are more accepting of innovative ideas, differences of opinion and eccentric or deviant behavior" (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, pp. 184). Also, U.S. people are more likely to "act independently of other members of the society" and they expect that men should "be more assertive and women more nurturing" (pp. 184). By total contrast, Korea national culture is described as having high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and femininity (Hofstede, 2001, 1997).

Furthermore, perception is influenced by cultural expectation, the tendency for people to see, perceive, and act according to their own culture rather than from an unfamiliar culture (Bagby, 1957; Severin & Tankard, 2001). Given these national cultures' differences and cultural expectation, it is not surprising that Korean samples' perception of relationships was different from the way in which U.S. respondents have recognized relationships.

Another possible explanation for this incongruent finding may be that previous studies (e.g., Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Cutlip et al., 1994; Hon & Grunig, 1999;

Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham et al., 1997) have focused heavily on the relationships between an organization and the public or between individuals; the present study explored relationships between organizations. Korean practitioners presumably perceive the “commitment” element as an individualistic relationship characteristic. Rather, they seem to recognize that “trust” and “control mutuality” elements could substitute for “commitment” in the context of the relationship between agency and client. In fact, Swann (2010) also emphasized that trust and mutuality would be inherent in building relationships between organizations, and described public relations practitioners as “experts in managing the communication programs for an organization that promote mutual understanding and trust” (pp. 2).

In addition, an interesting finding of this study was the significantly positive effect of agreement perception on perceived task conflict, which is incongruent with the researcher’s expectation. This result suggests that the more the agency and client perceive agreement on crisis management strategies, the more they perceive task conflict about crisis management. This result could be explained by the hierarchical relationship between Korean agencies and client organizations.

Hierarchy is defined as the distribution of authority (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006), and the hierarchical relationship refers to the vertical communication process in which an actor that is higher up in the hierarchy has the right to make decisions and give direction (Weber, 1946). Also, Hofstede (2001) found that organizations in high power distance cultures like South Korea would tend to have hierarchical relationships with their subsidiaries. Thus, the relationship between a Korean agency and its client tends to rely heavily on hierarchy, in which the client attempts to impose their authority, thoughts, and opinions on their agencies (Kim, Kim, & Han, 2009).

Under this hierarchical authority and relationship between the agency and the client, agency practitioners may have superficially or unconsciously agreed with their client practitioners' thoughts and opinions about crisis communication strategies. In fact, according to the *social identification model* (Turner, 1982), the agency and client practitioners tend to behave in accordance with the norms of the social hierarchy that they belong to. Thus, the superficial or unconscious agreement perception, which is not real agreement, may have resulted in more perceived task conflict between the Korean agency and client.

An alternative explanation may be that the agency and client may disagree about specific crisis communication tactics and tools, even though they agree on principle strategies of crisis communication. In fact, this study measured only agreement perception of the strategies. For example, agency and client respondents answered that they all highly agreed on the question item about a media contact strategy, "Once a crisis happens, an organization should announce its opinion and plan for the crisis through mass media as soon as possible." However, the agency and client may have different ideas and plans for how to conduct a press conference in terms of who will announce which contents in which manner at what time and where. However, this explanation should be confirmed by analyzing perceptions of agency and client practitioners using a co-orientational approach, which addresses perceived agreement between individuals or organizations and how that relates to actual agreement (Botan & Penchalapadu, 2009; Reber, Cropp, & Columbia, 2001). This is mentioned again in the future research section.

Practical Implications

First of all, it should be noted that two types of relationships between the agency and client were found in this study – trusting relationship and mutual relationship – and can be defined through the definition suggested by previous research (e.g., Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham et al., 1997). An agency and a client that have a trusting relationship might indicate that the agency and client can trust that each will do what they say they will do. Also, a mutual relationship between an agency and a client might indicate that the agency and client agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another.

It cannot be denied that both the agency and the client have a strong need for a good relationship each other. However, the ultimate goals that the agency and client want to reach through their good relationship may be different (Broom et al., 2000). A client may want its agency to more successfully help the client overcome a crisis, which means that excellent task performance may be the most important goal for the client (Stanford, 2008; Veil, 2012). On the other hand, the agency's main concern may be to maintain business contract with its client by increasing client's satisfaction (Davies & Prince, 2005; Fam & Waller, 2008).

Therefore, to meet their own goals, the client should focus more on creating a mutual relationship rather than a trusting relationship with its agency because the results of the present study revealed that the mutual relationship's effect on perceived task performance is greater than the trusting relationship's effect. To address a mutual relationship, for example, the client may have to focus not only on a consensus about power legitimacy but also on reciprocal influence between two parties. The client practitioners should not underestimate their agency practitioners' ability and professionalism, but should consider them as partners and respect the opinions and ideas of the agency practitioners.

The agency, however, should pay more attention to building a trusting relationship with its client because the trusting relationship's effect on perceived task satisfaction is larger than the mutual relationship's effect. To create and improve a trusting relationship, for example, the agency may have to focus on its sincerity to the client not only by showing high ability but also by keeping a promise for a long time. The agency practitioners must keep in mind that a relationship based on trust can be also created through their basic minds and attitudes to maintain regular contact with the client practitioners, whether related to business or not.

Furthermore, the agency needs to be careful about managing its task performance to maximize task satisfaction perceived by its client, because only perceived task performance can mediate the trusting relationship and perceived task satisfaction between agency and client. This suggests that even if the agency-client relationship is in a bad condition, successful task performance may improve task satisfaction perceived by the client.

Interestingly, perceived task conflict has a moderating effect between trusting relationship and perceived task performance. As mentioned earlier, an intermediate level of conflict may optimize the effect of the trusting relationship between agency and client on task performance in a crisis situation. In this sense, ways to reduce conflict recommended by Robbins (1974), Neilsen (1972), and Pondy (1967) and ways to stimulate conflict suggested by Robbins (1974) could help practitioners effectively manage the optimal level of conflict between agency and client.

If conflict is too high, it may be valuable for the agency and the client to avoid or reduce conflict. To lower conflict, scholars recommended that the two parties separate physically and repress emotions and opinions. Researchers have also proposed creating super-ordinate goals such as a collaboration strategy and emphasis on similarities as a smoothing strategy. For instance, the agency and client had better try to reach an agreement from ordinate issues to specific ones or from easy topics to difficult ones.

Robbins (1974) suggested some actions to stimulate conflict between organizations, which might be used if the level of conflict between an agency and its client is too low. These recommendations include: 1) acknowledge repressed conflict; 2) alter established communication channels; 3) hold back information; 4) over-communicate; and 5) challenge the existing power structure. For example, an agency practitioner could attempt to disagree with a client practitioner's opinion to make a little bit conflict between two parties.

In addition, the results of this study revealed that the *agreement perception* construct yielded a single factor, which means that Korean practitioners do not seem to separate crisis strategies into three stages; rather, they perceive the strategies for a single crisis stage. In other words, Korean practitioners do not seem to be familiar with the separation of crisis management strategies in terms of crisis stages. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies (e.g., Coombs, 2012; Ray, 1999; Seeger et al., 2003; Ulmer, 2001).

Crisis communication theory and practice in South Korea is still in its early stages (Park, 2010). In fact, most organizations do not even have a crisis communication manual. “Once a crisis occurs, Korean practitioners are supposed to execute all possible crisis communication strategies and tactics at the same time regardless of crisis stages. For instance, some practitioners monitor publics’ response, someone makes plans for the organization’s messages to media, and someone even prepares recovery strategies,” an anonymous crisis professional explained to the researcher.

Also, South Korean universities have started opening public relations courses since the early 2000s, and crisis communication courses since the middle of 2000s (Shin, Lee, & Kim, 2010). Students who have learned public relations and crisis communication courses in college classes are about to begin working in business fields. They are too young and too in the hierarchies of their organizations to apply their knowledge to practice. Thus, we may need to wait until they are experienced enough to make the application of crisis communication in South Korea go up.

Limitations

This study has its limitations. First, rather than surveying practitioners who are facing an organizational crisis, this study surveyed those who had already experienced crisis management. Although they were asked to recall the crisis event in which they were involved and client or agency partners with whom they handled the crisis before answering survey questions, it was limiting to exactly measure their perceptions during that period of the crisis event.

Second, the researcher had no information about the population for this study with which to compare the sample to indicate whether it is representative. The researcher was not allowed to access to the information of Korea Public Relations Association (KPRA) members because the KAPR did not open the information to the researcher. Thus, it is not possible to say that the 433 subjects of this study represent the characteristics of the population in terms of gender, age, job position, business type, and so forth.

Additionally, question items for perceived task satisfaction used in this study were from marketing research (Hendricks, 1988; Priem et al., 1995) rather than directly from public relations. However, the concept of satisfaction is also one of the elements measuring the relationship construct in public relations research. The question items for the marketing satisfaction construct were different than those for the public relations satisfaction construct. However, there may be some commonalities among trusting relationship, mutual relationship, and perceived task satisfaction variables, which might have influenced the results of this study. In fact, according to the correlation matrix, the coefficients among them were high, relative other coefficients, ranging from $r = .375$ to $r = .565$.

Future Research

The causes and characteristics of crises have become dynamic and diverse. Two relationship factors of this study are too simple to explain the effects of relationships on crisis communication. It should be further studied by examining not only more relationship factors (e.g., openness, understanding, closeness, etc.) but also customized relationship factors for specific national or organizational cultures (e.g., power distance, individualism, collectivism, masculinity, femininity, etc.) that influence crisis communication effectiveness. Also, we need to do more research about relationship management theory as it relates to non-U.S. cultures. In this sense, it would be valuable to examine how the agency-client relationship mediates or moderates the effects of these culture variables on crisis communication effectiveness.

To systematically measure and compare agency and client perceptions of crisis communication strategies, a co-orientational approach (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973; Verčič, Verčič, & Laco, 2006) would be useful. This approach could provide three kinds of information in terms of: 1) *agreement*, the degree to which the agency and client share similar evaluations or cognitions of crisis communication strategies; 2) *congruency*, the degree of similarity between an agency's own cognitions and its perception of client's cognitions, and vice versa; and 3) *accuracy*, the extent to which agency's estimate of client's cognitions actually and objectively matches what the client really think, and vice versa.

In addition, although the research model suggested in this study was based on strong theoretical argument from public relations, crisis communication, marketing, and business research, after a final research model is selected, the researcher should consider other equivalent models. According to the consideration of some equivalent models, the paths from both trusting and mutual relationships to agreement perception were also statistically significant. For a future study, research should explore the relationship between the agency and the client and its effect on perceptions of crisis communications strategies. Also, the paths from task satisfaction to task performance and two relationships (trusting and mutual relationships) were significant. To theoretically and empirically justify these paths, further studies about the relationship are needed.

Conclusions

This study examined the roles and effects of the relationship between the agency and client on crisis communication, specifically in the context of South Korea. This study contributed to the literature of relationships in public relations not only by exploring the effect of inter-organizational relationships (IOR) but also by applying the relationship to crisis communication. Furthermore, this study expanded the roles of relationships in crisis communication by revealing the results that the agency-client relationship can play a role as an antecedent factor that influences crisis communication effectiveness in terms of task conflict, performance, and satisfaction.

Table 1.

Crisis Stage Models.

Three-stage model	*Turner's (1976) six–stage model*	*Fink's (1986) four-stage model*	*Pauchant & Mitroff's (1992) five-stage model*
Pre-crisis (Proactive)	Stage I, II	Prodromal	Signal detection, Probing and prevention
Crisis (Reactive)	Stage III, IV	Acute, Chronic	Containment/damage limitation, Recovery
Post-crisis (Interactive)	Stage V, VI	Resolution	Learning

Table 2.

Observation Farthest from Centroid (Mahalanobis Distance)

Observation number	*Mahalanobis d-squared*	*P1*	*P2*
330	*110.356*	*.000*	*.000*
179	*92.989*	*.000*	*.000*
262	*84.524*	*.000*	*.000*
168	*80.676*	*.000*	*.000*
369	*79.932*	*.000*	*.000*
…	…	…	…

Note. Observation number refers to case number in SPSS file; *P1* is the possibility of any specific case being that far from the centroid; *P2* is the probability of the 1st, 2nd, then 3rd, etc. largest distance being that far from the centroid.

Table 3.

Mean, SD, and Correlations between Each Variable (N = 433)

	Rel1	Rel2	Rel3	Rel4	Rel7	Rel8	Rle9	Perc 1	Perc 2	Perc 3	Perc 4	Perc 5	Con 1	Con 2	Con 3	Con 4	Perf 1	Perf 2	Perf 3	Perf 4	Sat1	Sat2	Sat3	Sat4
Rel1	1																							
Rel2	.693	1																						
Rel3	.672	.712	1																					
Rel4	.545	.606	.594	1																				
Rel7	.483	.461	.477	.512	1																			
Rel8	.474	.477	.508	.495	.645	1																		
Rel9	.438	.372	.400	.381	.587	.694	1																	
Perc1	.319	.295	.294	.354	.256	.269	.270	1																
Perc2	.327	.302	.309	.334	.271	.300	.295	.754	1															
Perc3	.213	.262	.236	.226	.187	.238	.197	.457	.515	1														
Perc4	.134	.212	.155	.186	.159	.171	.130	.352	.407	.725	1													
Perc5	.218	.239	.271	.278	.356	.335	.338	.377	.439	.524	.453	1												
Con1	-.158	-.144	-.193	-.127	-.193	-.215	-.079	-.011	-.010	.018	.052	.016	1											
Con2	-.239	-.238	-.255	-.236	-.281	-.320	-.229	-.080	-.087	-.032	.015	-.098	.565	1										
Con3	-.155	-.193	-.129	-.096	-.174	-.222	-.152	.001	-.071	-.028	.054	-.037	.423	.516	1									
Con4	-.180	-.202	-.191	-.180	-.245	-.246	-.238	-.034	-.110	-.018	.079	-.084	.355	.543	.743	1								
Perf1	.296	.324	.295	.383	.302	.387	.309	.222	.233	.169	.116	.190	-.176	-.141	-.063	-.074	1							
Perf2	.388	.359	.393	.376	.362	.426	.402	.270	.292	.207	.125	.277	-.182	-.205	-.139	-.182	.554	1						
Perf3	.368	.401	.378	.387	.375	.458	.433	.298	.304	.199	.091	.287	-.160	-.200	-.172	-.185	.588	.743	1					
Perf4	.356	.382	.374	.351	.403	.480	.414	.226	.228	.173	.105	.302	-.174	-.148	-.103	-.113	.503	.681	.697	1				
Sat1	.431	.455	.458	.439	.447	.498	.375	.212	.236	.170	.132	.253	-.207	-.218	-.146	-.190	.513	.602	.632	.654	1			
Sat2	.508	.565	.563	.475	.485	.540	.397	.199	.224	.180	.149	.233	-.248	-.296	-.230	-.232	.403	.491	.533	.524	.699	1		
Sat3	.428	.517	.505	.461	.509	.507	.399	.278	.279	.217	.174	.285	-.217	-.277	-.127	-.160	.455	.422	.478	.459	.620	.758	1	
Sat4	.430	.509	.528	.463	.445	.503	.396	.261	.280	.198	.177	.268	-.194	-.267	-.158	-.166	.449	.450	.483	.501	.643	.726	.775	1
M	**4.75**	**4.77**	**4.90**	**4.75**	**4.89**	**4.95**	**4.98**	**5.32**	**5.39**	**5.14**	**4.92**	**5.25**	**4.23**	**3.89**	**3.77**	**3.70**	**4.60**	**4.82**	**4.90**	**4.89**	**4.75**	**4.79**	**4.66**	**4.73**
SD	**1.26**	**1.17**	**1.19**	**1.27**	**1.23**	**1.23**	**1.22**	**1.24**	**1.23**	**1.29**	**1.34**	**1.17**	**1.40**	**1.40**	**1.38**	**1.38**	**1.16**	**1.15**	**1.16**	**1.14**	**1.19**	**1.36**	**1.31**	**1.22**

Table 4.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Reliability

Construct	*Items*	*Loading*	*Cronbach's α*	R^2 *(%)*
Trusting	Rel1	.786		
Relationship	Rel2	.860		
	Rel3	.823	.874	
	Rel4	.715		
	Rel5 ¶	.562		70.50
Mutual	Rel6 ¶	.618		
Relationship	Rel7	.778	.843	
	Rel8	.813		
	Rel9	.848		
Agreement	Perc1	.740		
Perception	Perc2	.790		
	Perc3	.813	.844	56.32
	Perc4	.742		
	Perc5	.734		
	Perc6 ¶	.677		
Task Conflict	Con1	.706		
	Con2	.815	.814	64.53
	Con3	.848		
	Con4	.836		
Task Performance	Perf1	.764		
	Perf2	.883	.871	72.29
	Perf3	.898		
	Perf4	.851		
Task Satisfaction	Sat1	.834		
	Sat2	.904	.904	77.82
	Sat3	.896		
	Sat4	.893		

Note. For all measurement items, 7-point scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree), with the exception of the items for agreement perception, which were scaled from 1 (strongly different) to 7 (strongly alike).

¶ Deleted questions.

Table 5.

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of Each Construct

Construct	*CR*	*AVE*
Trusting Relationship	.825	.644
Mutual Relationship	.784	.646
Agreement Perception	.710	<u>.440</u>
Task Conflict	<u>.693</u>	.535
Task Performance	.841	.640
Task Satisfaction	.859	.708

Table 6.

Measurement Model

Construct	*Unstandardized Regression Weights*	*Standardized Regression Weights*	*S.E.*	*Error Variance*	*C.R.*
Trusting Relationship					
Rel1	1.00	.80		.049	
Rel2	.99	.85	.052	.037	19.265
Rel3	1.01	.84	.052	.039	18.982
Rel4	.91	.72	.058	.061	15.705
Mutual Relationship					
Rel7	1.00	.76		.055	
Rel8	1.15	.88	.065	.045	17.634
Rel9	1.01	.77	.064	.052	15.874
Perception					
Perc1	1.00	.61		.083	
Perc2	1.11	.70	.069	.076	16.005
Perc3	1.23	.72	.122	.083	10.036
Perc4	1.03	.60	.119	.100	8.695
Perc5	1.07	.70	.108	.068	9.960
Conflict					
Conf1	1.00	.52		.106	
Conf2	1.27	.70	.133	.086	9.611
Conf3	1.57	.84	.148	.068	10.627
Conf4	1.58	.84	.149	.069	10.631
Performance					
Perf1	1.00	.70		.056	
Perf2	1.25	.84	.084	.037	14.916
Perf3	1.32	.87	.086	.034	15.358
Perf4	1.20	.81	.083	.039	14.456
Satisfaction					
Sat1	1.00	.78		.043	
Sat2	1.28	.88	.061	.042	19.592
Sat3	1.20	.85	.063	.040	20.333
Sat4	1.11	.85	.057	.037	19.384

Table 7.

Convergent Validity between Each Construct (Φ)

	TR	*MR*	*PERC*	*CON*	*PERF*	*SAT*
TR	1					
MR	.692 (.615**)	1				
PERC	.469 (.388**)	.483 (.367**)	1			
CON	-.283 (-.266**)	-.348 (-.309**)	-.079 (-.035)	1		
PERF	.554 (.502**)	.616 (.543**)	.422 (.324**)	-.236 (-.223**)	1	
SAT	.719 (.643**)	.681 (.596**)	.394 (.319**)	-.297 (-.296**)	.719 (.668**)	1

Note. TR = trusting relationship, MR = mutual relationship, PERC = agreement perception, CON = perceived task conflict, PERF = perceived task performance, SAT = perceived task satisfaction. The numerical values within parenthesis are Pearson correlation coefficients between constructs.

** $p < .01$.

Table 8.

Discriminant Validity

Trait	*Correlation (Φ)*	*Single Factor Model*	*Two Factor Model*	*Improvement in fit from single to two factor model*
		χ^2 *CFI* *RMSEA*	χ^2 *CFI* *RMSEA*	$\Delta\chi^2$ *(df = 1)* *ΔCFI* *ΔRMSEA*
Trusting Relationship & Mutual Relationship	.692	270.995 .844 .206	41.903 .982 .072	-229.092 .136 -.134
Trusting Relationship & Task Satisfaction	.719	402.363 .831 .210	44.117 .989 .055	-358.246 .158 -.155
Mutual Relationship & Task Satisfaction	.681	314.327 .841 .223	46.452 .982 .077	-267.875 .141 -.146
Performance & Task Satisfaction	.719	453.536 .816 .224	140.586 .948 .122	-312.950 .132 -.102

Table 9.

Results of Tests for Direct Effect Hypotheses

Hs	*Path*	*Unstandardized β*	*Standardized β*	*S.E.*	*C.R.*	*P*
H1a	TR→CON	-.084	-.114	.062	-1.360	*ns*
H1b	MR→CON	-.268	-.340	.073	-3.676	< .001
H2	PERC→CON	.139	.143	.071	1.957	< .05
H3	CON→PERF	-.009	-.008	.051	-.174	*ns*
H4a	TR→SAT	.348	.375	.054	6.430	< .001
H4b	MR→SAT	.156	.156	.062	2.504	< .01
H5	CON→SAT	-.053	-.042	.049	-1.086	*ns*
H6	PERF→SAT	.488	.403	.069	7.072	< .001
H11a	TR→PERF	.185	.242	.054	3.418	< .001
H11b	MR→PERF	.372	.451	.064	5.762	< .001

Table 10.

Results of Tests for Indirect Effect Hypotheses

Hypothesis	*Path*	*Coefficient*	*Indirect effect (β)*
H7a	TR→CON→PERF	2.282	-.011
H7b	MR→CON→PERF	1.646	-.032
H8a	TR→CON→SAT	2.968	-.004
H8b	MR→CON→SAT	2.793	-.012
H9	PERC→CON→PERF	.631	-.026
H10	PERC→CON→SAT	.633	-.042
H12a	TR→PERF→SAT	8.362 **	.033 **
H12b	MR→PERF→SAT	8.692 **	.091 **

Note. Coefficients were calculated by the product of coefficients method, and indirect effects (β) were yielded by the analysis of multiple mediator model using phantom variables in an Amos program. To test for mediation coefficients, the two following regression equations were estimated: 1) $M = i_1 + aX + e_1$, regressing the mediator (M) on the independent variable (X); and 2) $Y = i_2 + cX + bM + e_2$, regressing the dependent variable (Y) on both the independent variable and on the mediator. *a* is the coefficient relating the independent variable to the mediator, *b* is the coefficient relating the mediator to the dependent variable adjusted for the independent variable, i_1 and i_2 are intercepts, and e_1 and e_2 are residuals. The product of *a*, *b*, and *ab* are computed to form the mediated effect. To test for the significance, the product is divided by the standard error of the product and the ratio is compared to a standard normal distribution.

** $p < .01$

Table 11.

Results of Indirect Effects

Path	*Indirect effect*	*P*
TR→CON→PERF→SAT	-.005	*ns*
MR→CON→PERF→SAT	-.016	*ns*
PERC→CON→PERF→SAT	-.013	*ns*

Note. Indirect effects (β) were yielded by the analysis of multiple mediator model using phantom variables in an Amos program.

Table 12.

Moderating Effects of Perceived Task Conflict

DV	*IV*	*Unstandardized* β	*Standardized* β	*S.E.*	R^2 *Change*	*Tolerance*	*VIF*
PERF	*TR*	-.059	-.086*	.028	.268	.977	1.023
	MR	-.035	-.051	.028	.292	.955	1.047
SAT	*TR*	-.043	-.055	.028	.433	.977	1.023
	MR	-.009	-.012	.030	.370	.981	1.020

Note. To test for moderating effects, the three following regression equations were estimated. (To solve a multicollinearity problem, the mean centering method was employed). 1) $y = a + b_1x$, regressing the dependent variable (y) on the independent variable (x); 2) $y = a + b_1x + b_2z$, regressing the dependent variable (y) on both the independent variable (x) and the moderator variable (z); 3) $y = a + b_1x + b_2z + b_3xz$, regressing the dependent variable (y) on the independent variable (x), moderator variable (z), and the interaction term (xz). This table shows the results of each of the third regression equation in terms of the interaction terms.

* $p < .05$

Figure 1.

Initially Hypothesized Research Model.

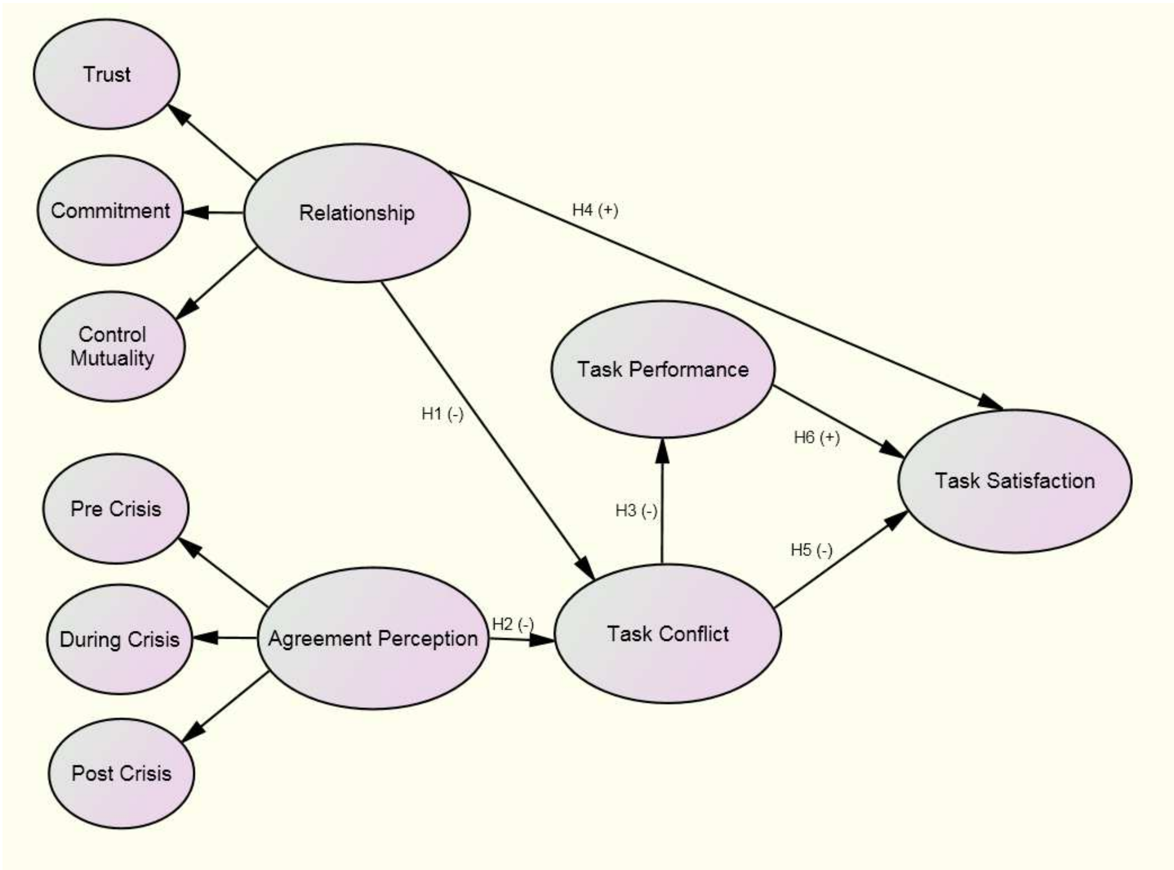
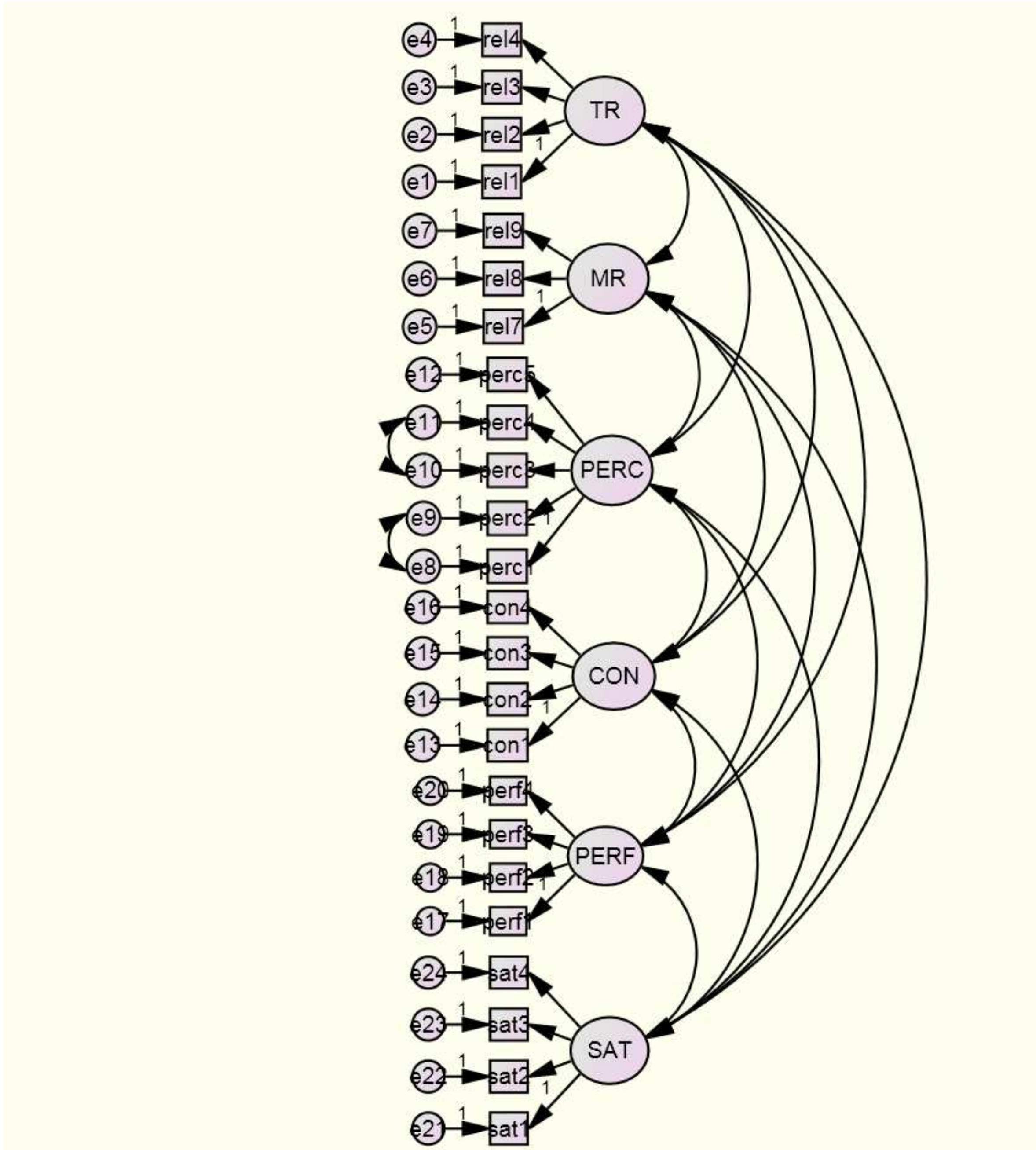


Figure 2.

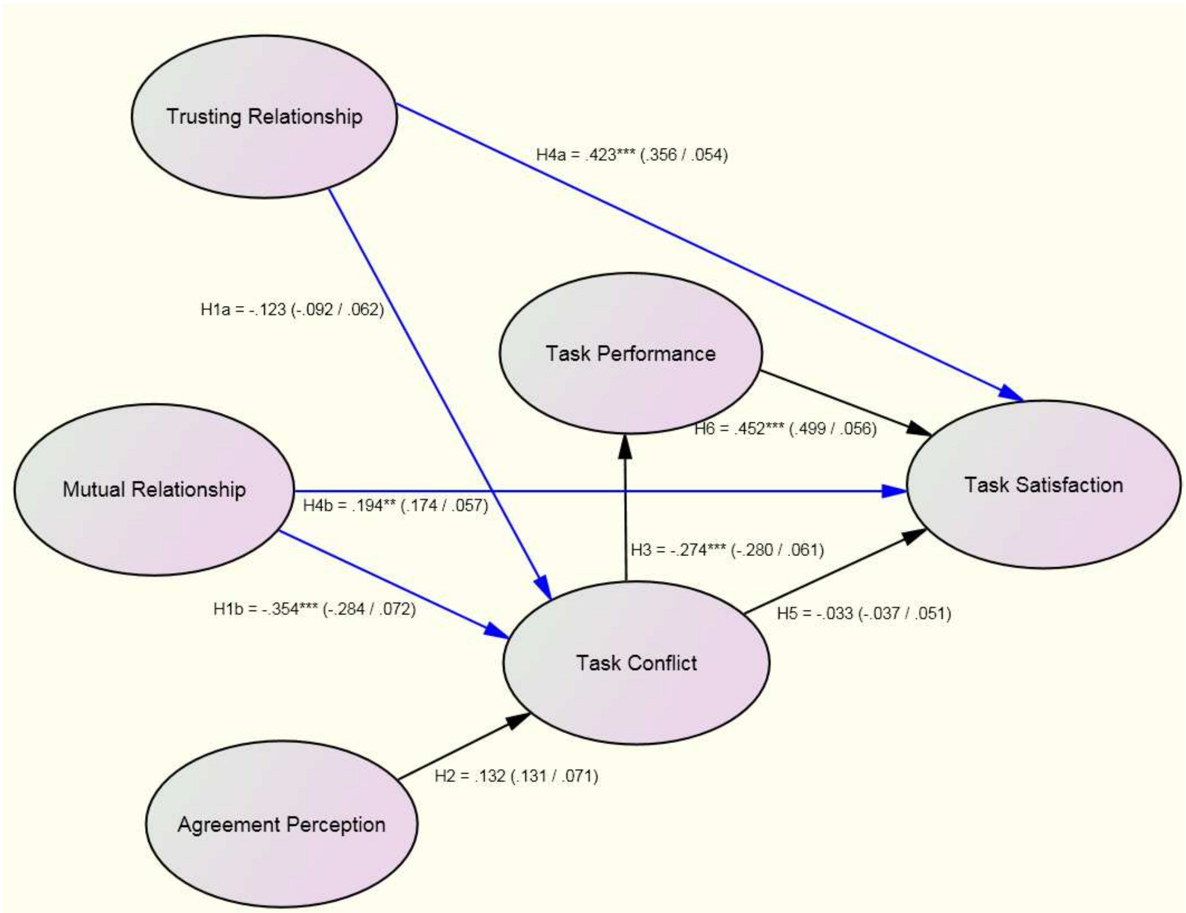
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of Measurement Items



Note. TR = trusting relationship, MR = mutual relationship, PERC = agreement perception, CON = perceived task conflict, PERF = perceived task performance, SAT = perceived task satisfaction.

Figure 3.

Newly Hypothesized Research Model

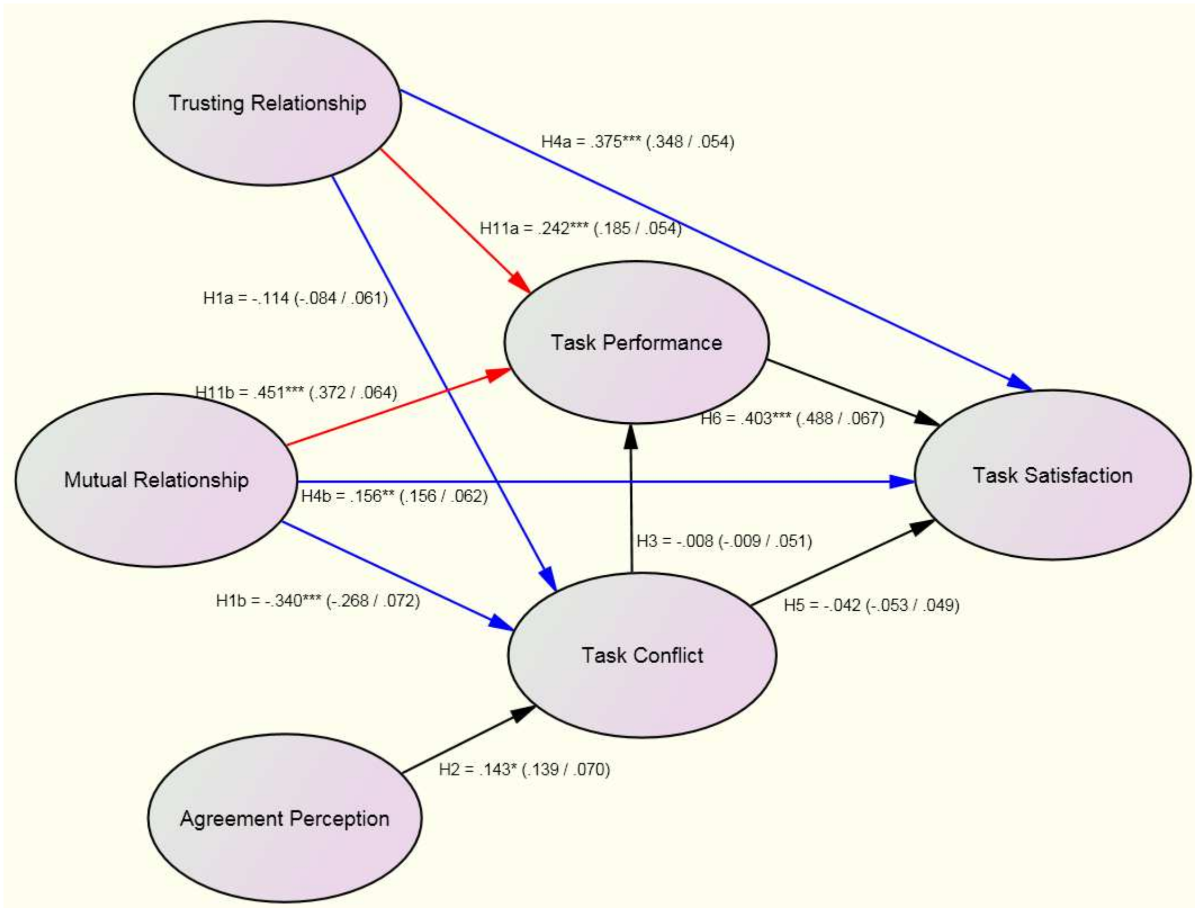


Note. χ^2 = 725.218, *df* = 239, p < .001, CFI = .922, RMSEA = .069 (90% CI: .063-.074), SRMR = .132. Coefficients are standardized regression weight. The numerical values within parenthesis are unstandardized regression weights and their standard errors. For the sake of brevity, covariances among exogenous variables and error terms for indicators of latent variables are omitted from the figure. Ovals represent latent variables.

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4.

Modified Research Model



Note. $\chi^2 = 570.343$, $df = 237$, $p < .001$, CFI = .947, RMSEA = .057 (90% CI: .051-.063), SRMR = .054. Coefficients are standardized regression weight. The numerical values within parenthesis are unstandardized regression weights and their standard errors. For the sake of brevity, covariances among exogenous variables and error terms for indicators of latent variables are omitted from the figure. Ovals represent latent variables.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Material 1. Pre-notice E-mail Letter

Dear OOO,

I am Jin Hong Ha, a doctoral student of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I have also worked as a public relations practitioner for seven years. I am writing to ask for your participation in a survey that I am conducting with Lois Boynton, Ph. D., Associate Professor of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We are asking PR professionals like you to reflect their views on crisis management.

Recently, crisis management has received a lot of attention from diverse types of organizations including governments, non-profit organizations, and companies. We are conducting this survey to examine client-agency relationship and its effect on crisis management effectiveness. We hope the results of this survey will be useful in making crisis management strategies be more effective. Also, if you would like to receive a summary of the results of this research, we are willing to share it with you.

We would like to do everything we can to make it easy and enjoyable for professionals to participate in the study. I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. This research can only be successful with the generous help of people like you.

We hope you will take 8-10 minutes of your time to help us. Most of all, we hope that you enjoy the questionnaire and the opportunity to voice your thoughts and opinions about crisis management. Your participation in this study is completely anonymous and voluntary. Your name will not appear with any of the survey data. You will receive an invitation letter through postal mail that instruct you how to access to the online-based survey website.

We look forward to hearing your opinions in this survey.

Best wishes,

Ha, Jin Hong
Ph.D. Student and Royster Fellow
Carroll Hall 388
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
jhha@live.unc.edu
919-768-3524

Appendix B: Survey Material 2. Invitation Mail Letter

UNC SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION	THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH CAROLINA *at* CHAPEL HILL

JIN HONG HA
Ph.D. Student and Royster Fellow
CARROLL HALL
CB# 3365, CHAPEL HILL,
NC 27599-3365, USA
Tel: 919.768.3524
Fax: 919.962.0620
Email: jhha@live.unc.edu

December 12, 2012

Dear OOO,

As you may recall, I am writing to ask for your help in understanding the effect of the relationship between PR agency and client professionals in crisis management. The best way we have of learning about this issue is by asking practitioners like you who work in public relations.

Your responses to this survey are very important and will help in understanding and advancing crisis management. This is a short survey and should take you no more than 8-10 minutes to complete. Please visit the survey website below. The survey Website will expire at 24:00 on Jan. 31, 2013.

Survey Link: https://unc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_3gj7YVq8OGvGdsF

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and all of your responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses in any reports of this data. Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at jhha@live.unc.edu or 919-768-3524. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (IRB Study #: 12-2341). Medical School Building 52, CB #7097, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3113, 919-966-3113.

By taking a few minutes to share your thoughts and opinions about crisis communication you will be helping us out a great deal, and a small token of appreciation will be given to you as a way of saying thank you.

We appreciate your time and consideration in completing the survey. Thank you for participating in this study! It is only through the help of professionals like you that we can provide information and suggestions to help improve the theoretical and practical crisis management. Thus, if you would like to receive a summary of the results of this research, we are willing to share it with you.

Many thanks,

Appendix C: Survey Material 3. Reminder E-mail Letter

Dear OOO,

We recently sent you an invitation mail letter asking you to respond to a brief survey about crisis management. We understand how valuable your time is. We are hoping you may be able to give about 8-10 minutes to help us collect important information by completing a short survey. Your responses to this survey are important and will help in understanding effective crisis management.

If you have already completed the survey, we really appreciate your participation. If you have not yet responded to the survey, we encourage you to take a few minutes and complete the survey. We plan to end this study at 24:00 on Jan. 31, 2013, so we wanted to email everyone who has not responded to make sure you had a chance to participate.

Please click on the link below to go to the survey websites (or copy and paste the survey link into your Internet browser).

Survey Link: https://unc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_3gj7YVq8OGvGdsF

Thank you in advance for your help by completing the survey. Your response is important. Professionals like you are the best source of information to help improve the theoretical and practical crisis management.

Sincerely,

Appendix D: Web Survey Questionnaire

[Screening Questions]

1. Have you ever handled organizational crisis communication or management?

Yes → go to the question 2.

No → stop here.

2. Which of the following best describes your current or most recent professional environment?

Client practitioner → go to the question 3.

Agency practitioner → go to the question 4.

Academic professor → stop here.

Student → stop here.

Others → stop here.

3. Has your company ever hired public relations agencies?

Yes → go to the question 4.

No → stop here.

[Main Questions]

Before starting this survey, please recall most recent and representative crisis communication or management project that you experienced. Also, please recall the agency or client involved in the project. And then, answer the questions.

4. Would you provide a brief description of the crisis you recall?

( )

5. On a scale of 1-7, where 7 is *very high*, please rate the threat level of the crisis that you recall.

Very Low						Very High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. *<u>On a scale of 1-7, where 7 means strongly agree</u>, please rate the agreement of each of the following statements.*

My client/agency can be relied on to keep its promises.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My client/agency has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My client/agency does not mislead my company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can see that my client/agency wants to maintain a long-term commitment to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is a long-lasting bond between my client/agency and my group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel a sense of loyalty to my client/agency.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My client/agency believes my opinions are legitimate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I have an opportunity to interact with my client/agency, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe I have influence on the decision-makers of my client/agency.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have high expectations about the quality of the relationship with my client/agency.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. *<u>On a scale of 1 (strongly different) to 7 (strongly alike)</u>, please check the extent to which you and your client/agency have the same or different opinion about each crisis communication strategies below.*

A crisis communication manual should be update and revised regularly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
An organization should have a crisis communication plan and crisis manual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Once a crisis happens, an organization should announce its opinion and plan for the crisis through mass media as soon as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Once a crisis happens, an organization should disclose information about the crisis through mass media as soon as possible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Post-crisis communication strategy should focus mostly on rebuilding relationships with the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Post-crisis communication strategy should focus mostly on repairing image and reputation damages of an organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. *<u>On a scale of 1-7, where 7 means strongly agree</u>, please rate the agreement of each of the following statements.*

My client/agency withholds information necessary for the attainment of my group tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is lack of mutual assistance between my client/agency and my group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There are personality clashes between my client/agency and my group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My client/agency creates problems for my group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. *<u>On a scale of 1-7, where 7 means strongly agree</u>, please rate the agreement of each of the following statements.*

We effectively prepared the crisis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our crisis communication strategies did work well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, we dealt well with the crisis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our crisis management contributed to minimizing the damage created by the crisis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. *<u>On a scale of 1-7, where 7 means strongly agree</u>, please rate the agreement of each of the following statements.*

Working with my client/agency has been an enjoyable experience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would like to work with my client/agency in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My client/agency meets our needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am satisfied with the performance of my client/agency.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

[Demographic Questions]

11. What is your gender?

Male (   )   Female (   )

12. What is your age?

(   ) age

13. What is your educational background?

Less than high school ( )

Undergraduate ( )

Masters degree ( )

Ph.D. degree ( )

14-1. (For client practitioner) What is the type of your company? (e.g., health care, manufacturing, etc.)

( )

14-2. (For agency practitioner) What is the type of your company?

Public ( )

Private ( )

15. How many people are working in your company?

Less than 50 people ( )

51 to 100 people ( )

More than 100 people ( )

16. What is your job title in your company?

( )

17. Would you provide a brief description of your main tasks in your company?

( )

18. How many years have you worked in current company as well as all previous ones?

( ) years

19. How much is your annual income?

Less than $50,000 ( )

$50,000 ~ $60,000 ( )

$60,001 ~ $70,000 ( )

$70,001 ~ $80,000 ( )

$80,001 ~ $90,000 ( )

$90,001 ~ $100,000 ( )

More than $100,000 ( )

I prefer not to say ( )

20. On a scale of 1-7, *where 7 is very high*, please rate the power level that you have in your company in terms of decision making.

Very Low						Very High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E: Study Consent Form

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study # 12-2341
Consent Form Version Date: November 19, 2012
Title of Study: The role of relationships in crisis communication: Effects of agency-client relationships and perception of crisis strategies on crisis-related task conflict, performance, and satisfaction
Principal Investigator: Jin Hong Ha
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Journalism and Mass Communication
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-768-3524
Email Address: jhha@live.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Lois Boynton
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-843-8342
Email Address: lboynton@email.unc.edu

<u>What are some general things you should know about research studies?</u>
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

<u>What is the purpose of this study?</u>
The purpose of this research study is to learn about how agency-client relationships influence crisis communication. For the purposes of this study, you will be asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire related to the Web site.

<u>How many people will take part in this study?</u>
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 400 people in this research study.

<u>How long will your part in this study last?</u>
The study will take approximately 8to 10 minutes of your time. There will be no other follow-ups.

<u>What will happen if you take part in the study?</u>
When you visit the URL, you will view a survey Web site and then you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to report your opinions related to each question. Please be assured that there are no

"right" or "wrong" answers. Also, please be assured that you are free to not answer any questions or to end the study at any time.

<u>What are the possible benefits from being in this study?</u>
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

<u>What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?</u>
There are no uncommon or previously known risks associated with this research. However, you should report any problems to the researcher during the study at any time.

<u>How will your privacy be protected?</u>
Only the principal investigator will have access to the collected data. Participants *will not* be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

<u>What if you want to stop before your part in the study is complete?</u>
You can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

<u>Will you receive anything for being in this study?</u>
You will receive small cash incentive ($2.00) for participating in this study.

<u>Will it cost you anything to be in this study?</u>
There will be no costs for being in the study

<u>What if you have questions about this study?</u>
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints, concerns, or if a research-related injury occurs, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

<u>What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?</u>
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

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Title of Study: The role of relationships in crisis communication: Effects of agency-client relationships and perception of crisis strategies on crisis-related task conflict, performance, and satisfaction

Principal Investigator: Jin Hong Ha

<u>Participant's Agreement:</u>

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. By clicking the "agree" button below, you are considered as being interested in participation in this study.

Agree ⊙

Disagree ⊙

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